TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE INCREDIBLE MACHINE OF JEFF TUNNELL

A DECKER PUBLICATIONS PERIODICAL

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

ELECTRONIC GAMES

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SLIME FACTORY
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YEAH!
AAAAH!
OUCH!
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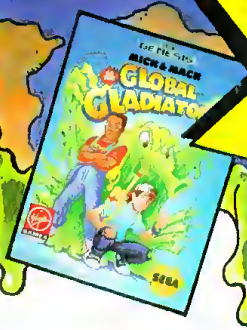

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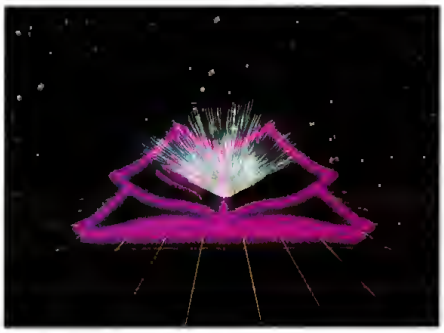

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COVER STORY

- **War in the Pacific 54**
  World War II simulations are becoming more popular, and EG is proud to bring you closer to the action. Naval Officer and EG correspondent Ed Dille takes a look at these new games.

FERTURES

- **Gaming On Line 24**
  In part two of our series on gaming bulletin board services, we look at the new and improved Sierra Network.

- **Players' Guide to Game Systems 31**
  For those who can't decide which game system to buy, EG offers an overview of the latest 16-Bit systems, CD units, games, and controllers, with a look at the status of 8-Bit gaming and the future of 32-Bit super-systems.

- **EG Interview 48**
  Jeff Tunnell, one of the minds behind the Dynamix software development group, talks to EG about his new development house, Jeff Tunnell Productions, and some of the games scheduled from this company, including **The Incredible Machine**.

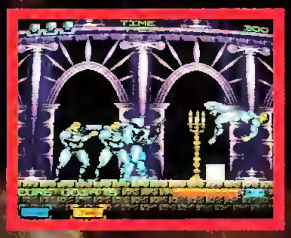
EG looks at the game systems.

EG's highest-rated video game yet, the incredible Space Megaforce.

EG looks at World War II through the window of the computer screen.

About the art — We et EG would like to thank the following artists for their contributions to this issue:
Paul Alexender— Cover end Wer in the Pecific art
Eric Curry — All department logos, end verious photography
Bob Forrest — Geme Systems Cover end All Game Systems Photography (© 1992 Bob Forrest)
Cliff Spohn — EG Interview
We regret that the some of the performers scheduled to eppeer this month were unable to make it, and would like to invite President George Bush, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, His Holiness the Pope, Jerry Mathers, the Flying Fitzpatricks, Elvis, the guy on 34th street thet juggles cleavers, Jack Copley of the Bronx Zoo, end David Lettermen to join us in the future.

ROBOCOP 3™



OCP is sending in Rehab Officers to clear the streets of Old Detroit, making way for the construction of Delta City. When ROBOCOP sees helpless families forced out of their homes as the bulldozers move in, he joins the resistance movement to battle the Rehabs!

Armed with a new multi-weapon arm attachment containing a large-bore cannon and a smart bomb, plus a gyropack for airborne assault capability, ROBOCOP faces a batallion of ED-209's, tanks, heavy artillery and a new adversary, DTDMD. The odds seem impossible, but remember—you're ROBOCOP!

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The name of the game

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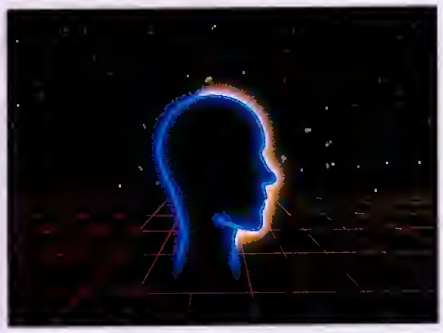

POWER ON!

Gaming Fans: Unite or Die!

It's time for electronic gaming fandom to move from adolescence to adulthood. We stand poised on the brink of this hobby's Third Age, and we must either go forward together or regress to days when gamers were isolated individuals with virtually no say about their favorite pastime.

Electronic gaming was more a product group than a hobby in the eighties. Everyone knew a few local players, but there was no sense of community. Computer user groups tried to pull things together, but they often ignored games, and in the mid-80s, got so identified with piracy in the minds of software publishers that they were kept at arms length.

Since 1990, however, I've written columns outlining the benefits of a personal forum for gaming opinions. Not everyone can write for the prozines, but every gamer has a right to express likes and dislikes—and notions about how things could be improved. I backed up the generalizations with lists of potential readers available free to anyone who wanted to publish a fanzine. The idea caught fire. It succeeded more rapidly than I could have imagined—a tribute to the intelligence, enthusiasm, and industriousness of electronic gamers.

Thus began the Second Age, the rise of fanzines. Now more than 200 titles are published on a variety of schedules. Fans as young as 12 and grizzled veterans who'll never see 40 again have discovered a whole new way to enjoy their interest. And they're communicating with each other. Besides fanzines, they send letters, talk on the phone, and visit each other's homes. For the first time, electronic gaming fans are sharing their ideas about gaming and their hopes for the hobby.

Now it's time to climb the next step and establish a national fan organization. Fans need a group to represent their interests in the professional gaming industry and to support projects that can benefit gamers everywhere. Among the worthwhile things a national organization could accomplish: a fanzine index, new game release lists, an amateur press association, a letters forum for debates on game-related issues, and ultimately, a World Electronic Gaming Convention. No single fan can do all these things, but fandom can turn them all into realities if we pull together.

When I say "we," I mean the fans, not the professionals. Despite my personal enthusiasm, I have consciously restricted myself to a subordinate role. **EG** strongly supports all sincere fan activity, but it would hurt fandom if one magazine or software publisher jumped in and started a club. Our national fan organization must be totally independent. That's the only way the club can deal with all magazines, publishers, and professional associations fairly.

That means the national organization must be created by fans, for fans. The publisher of **EG** has authorized me to devote space to fandom, but Decker Publications has absolutely no financial interest in any of this. We want only to foster whatever projects and activities will enhance our readers' enjoyment of the world's greatest hobby.

I've been advising a group of fans who are forming a national organization. The effort, under the leadership of well known gamer Edward Finkler, is ready to bear fruit. The next **EG** will present the program and policies of the National Association of Electronic Gaming Enthusiasts (NAEGE). I urge every electronic gaming hobbiest to read this article carefully and to join and support NAEGE. With a national club leading the way, we can turn the Third Age into the Golden Age of the electronic gaming hobby.

— Arnie Katz

ELECTRONIC GAMES

DECEMBER, 1992

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3

A DECKER PUBLICATIONS, INC. PERIODICAL

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DISTRIBUTED BY:
WARNER PUBLISHING SERVICES, INC.

Electronic Games (ISSN #1063-8326) is published monthly by Decker Publications, Inc. 1920 Highland Ave., Suite 222, Lombard, IL 60148. Subscription rates for U.S. $23.95, Canada and Mexico $33.95, and all others by air mail only $80.00. Single issue rates: $3.95. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Electronic Games, P.O. Box 7311, Red Oak, IA 51591-2311. For subscription changes, change of address, or correspondence concerning subscriptions call 800-444-3334. The editors and the publisher are not responsible for unsolicited materials. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the expressed written permission of Decker Publications, Inc. Copyright © 1992, Decker Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. All materials listed in this magazine are subject to manufacturers change and the publisher assumes no responsibility for such changes. Printed in the USA.

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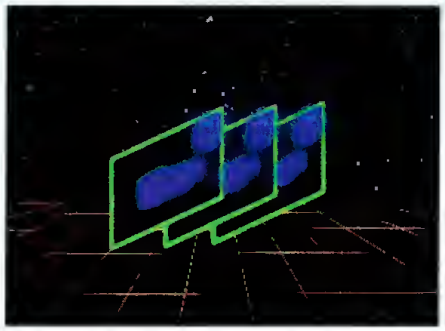

FEEDBACK

Letters From Our Readers

A Gaming Pioneer Comes Home

I was thrilled to see your magazine on the newsstand. I was even more pleased to discover that you are geared toward the older gamers. I don't buy the vast majority of the gaming magazines, because they make you feel guilty if you're past puberty. *Electronic Gaming Monthly* and *Computer Game Review* do a great job of covering video games and computer games respectively, but I've also been looking for a magazine that reports on the industry as a whole. It appears that my search is over. Judging from your first issue, I have a lot to look forward to. Thanks for the great first issue and keep up the good work.

Chris Wu, Pensacola, FL

Thanks, Chris. It's always a thrill to hear from old readers like yourself.

The Family that Plays Together...

I'm 51 years old and compete against my son, daughter and their spouses on SNES and Genesis. My subscription card is in the mail. Your goal and philosophy (Power On! A New Beginning...) puts you right on top of my reading list.

Arthur M. Smith, Chanute, KS

Isn't it great how games cut across all ages? They are truly an all-family experience.

Some Good Ideas

I loved the first issue of your magazine! Finally, a magazine for the older game player! Please continue to keep the same amount of reading material in your magazine. I am so tired of the kiddie gaming magazines filled with comics and pictures.

I think it would be better if you could print your subscription coupons and other coupons or forms to send in on the back page of advertising - something we wouldn't miss or ruin by cutting out the coupon.

I enjoyed the Kunkel Report on joysticks. I too learned to play video games on the Atari 2600. Maybe that is why I had so much trouble trying to learn the Nintendo control pads. I adapted, but I prefer the pistol grip joysticks. Do you know if there are any pistol grip joysticks planned for release for the SNES?

Mrs. Martha Guilliams, Barberton, OH

Thanks for the good suggestion; we'll pass it along to our art department. Be sure to check Ross Chamberlain's article in this month's Players' Guide for information on the latest controllers.

More History!

I did not quite know what to expect when I picked up the first issue of **EG**. I have been a die-hard gamer for just over ten years (I'm 19). As I thumbed through the new **EG**, I was delighted at the quality.

I have one suggestion. How about a detailed history of video games, with pictures of early 80's games (arcade and home)? There are millions of kids out there who do not believe the planet Earth existed before 1985. Besides, all of us codgers would love a trip down memory lane, since a lot of us have sold our old systems. Anyway, I hope **EG** sticks around for ten more years, cause this time the road ahead is paved with silicon, and there ain't no crash in sight!

Cypher-D-Snark, Kingman, AZ

*Well, Cypher-old-buddy, we sure hope you get your wish: we hope and expect **EG** to last forever! And your suggestion about the history article goes right along with our interests, too.*

Wants Game Design Info

I'm 14 and I've played video games since I was 2 years old, so I became interested in video game magazines.

I do have some suggestions to make, though. You need a letter section to tell people the steps of designing a video game, and where to send it to see if any businesses are interested.

Bob Petty, Russell Springs, KY

How's this for service? Ask for a letter column and here it is! And, an article about game design is also a good idea. We'll try to do just that.

About that Ad...

I saw the subscription page which showed issue 1, but as my eyes strolled down further, another **EG** cover was shown with "Players' Guide to Role Playing" on top, with the issue number Vol. 1, Issue 1! Was this mag a prototype turned down in favor of the released first issue?

Josh Bay, Fremont, NE

That's a keen observation, Josh, and a good question. Actually, that was a prototype done for the potential advertisers before EG started. But there's nothing to buy; all the interior pages were blank!

Keep those letters coming to:
Feedback, c/o Electronic Games, 330 South Decatur, #152, Las Vegas, NV 89107

CATCH THE TAITO WAVE

This head bangin', hard checkin', free-for-all will rattle your bones and send you flyin' into the next county. So, lace 'em up and CHECK it out!

While supervising the Button Pusher Division of Spacely Sprockets, George Jetson notices that the robots and computers are malfunctioning. With the help of Jane, Judy, and Elroy, George's mission is to find and stop the cause of this problem.

Fred uncovers a treasure map and sets off on a wild adventure to find the loot. Help Fred through seven adventure-filled stages in this journey.

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TAITO
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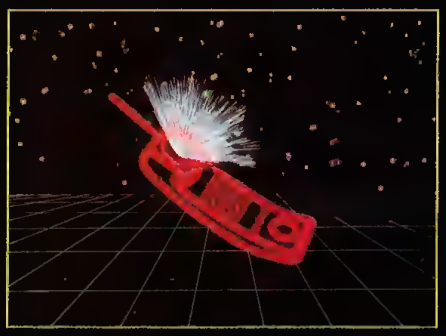
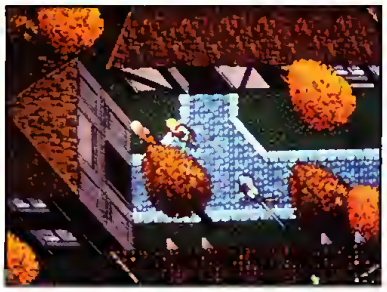


EG HOTLINE

Compiled by: Joyce Worley

Origin Wings To EA

Electronic Arts signed an agreement to purchase Origin Systems, a deal valued at approximately $35 million. Under its terms, EA will exchange roughly 1.3 million shares for all outstanding Origin securities.



Origin's Ultima 7.

Origin will continue operations in Austin, TX, as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Electronic Arts. Robert Garriott will continue as President and CEO of Origin, and also become a vice president of EA. Richard "Lord British" Garriott will retain his position of Senior Vice President and Creative Director for Origin, and become an executive producer for EA.

Larry Probst, President and CEO of Electronic Arts, explained the acquisition. "It will help launch Electronic Arts into the CD market and enhance Electronic Arts' position as the leading worldwide independent publisher of entertainment software."

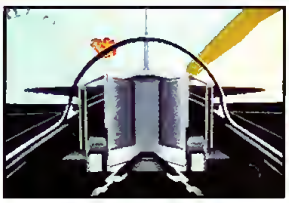
Origin is best known for state-of-the-art RPGs and space combat simulators. The company has developed and produced over 30 titles on computer and compact disc platforms, and has also developed titles for video games. Their most famous work is the Ultima series of fantasy RPGs, which has sold over 1.5 million units worldwide. The popular **Wing Commander** line of space combat simulators has already sold more than a half million units worldwide.

Gamers Win Sega/ Accolade Battle

Video gamers were the big winners when the ongoing legal battle between Sega of America and Accolade, Inc. finally reached a conclusion, returning Accolade's Ballistic line of games to retailer's shelves. The Court of Appeals dissolved an April injunction that prevented Accolade from developing, manufacturing or distributing Genesis-compatible video games. The freeze kept the company from developing a number of games intended for holiday release.

Sega alleged copyright and trademark infringement in the reverse engineering techniques Accolade used. Accolade argued that both law and legal precedent encouraged such study so long as end results were not substantially similar to original copyrighted material. Miller applauded the decision, noting "Sega has never claimed that Accolade's game programs are 'substantially similar' to Sega's, because they are not."

Shoot-Out In Vegas



Las Vegas was the scene of the final round of competition on **Falcon 3.0**, when top guns gathered for a shoot-out. The players organized the affair themselves, with cooperation of the folks at Software City, after several months of on-line competition on the Prodigy network. A tournament would allow the networkers a chance to meet face-to-face, so the flyboys put together this special weekend event.

Spectrum HoloByte sent representatives to oversee the proceedings and award prizes to the winning aces. Top-jock honors went to Donald Canet of Laguna Beach, CA, along with a leather flight jacket donated by Spectrum Holobyte.

The weekend also included a talk on dogfighting tactics by Buzz Hoffman, president of Thrustmaster (manufacturers of weapons/throttle control systems), and a presentation on future flight simulators coming from Spectrum Holobyte by Daron Stinnett, Simulations Manager.

Cycle Coin-Op Shakes Up Players

Atari's two player version of **Moto Frenzy** has arcade players all shook up, thanks to some thigh-slapping technology.

Moto Frenzy Mini Deluxe seats the competitors side by side in cycle-styled control units. Arcade motorbikers each face their own monitor as the bikes lean, pivot, and do wheelies along six tracks that feature scenic obstacles (rivers, trees, rocks, and onlookers), while the cyclists target-shoot from the handlebar control buttons. Tracks include an indoor arena, Hawaii, Utah, Vegas, Kenya and Norway, each with characteristic problems (big foot trucks, lava flows, buffalo, desert storms, monkeys and polar bears, respectively).

Two of the full-motion simulators can be linked for four-player competition. The play experience produces an illusion of real motorcycles through a vibrating throttle control, and (by use of a solenoid thumper) a bouncing ride when the player is shot or gets off-road.

Sega Opens Arcade

In an exclusive **EG** interview, Tom Petit, President of Sega Enterprises USA (the commercial division of the company) discussed his company's new arcade. This marks a return to the business, after Sega Enterprises sold its arcade operation in 1990.

The first new Sega arcade has 80 machines in operation in Scotty's Golf Park, Dallas, TX. Along with Sega's own coin-snatchers, they also feature games from the other major companies in the arcade industry.

"Sega is going to actively pursue the operator business in the future, and we will be opening additional sites," explained Mr. Petit. "We'll utilize proprietory technology as platforms in these locations."

He indicated that the play-for-pay sites will be a showcase for new technologies in the arcade business, so players will get a chance to see innovative new products as soon as they are developed.

Sony Hunts for Missing Kids

Sony Corp. of America and The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children may be able to find some of the nation's missing kids. Sony will supply the Data Discman Electronic Book Player, their hand-held system with CD-ROM disc drive, at a reduced cost to law enforcement agencies and other organizations that search for children. Their officers may see information and photographs on screen from The National Center case files. Sony has recorded the Center's active files onto a CD-ROM disc, and will provide quarterly update discs of case developments.

Ernie Allen, president of The National Center, explained: "In child abduction cases, every hour can mark the difference between success and failure. Using the Data Discman, our public and private partners will have access to the latest information on thousands of missing children at their fingertips."

This is not Sony's first time to help in this effort. The photographic equipment, scanners and printers used to age-enhance photos of kids missing over two years was donated by Sony in 1989; the company also provided funding to train forensic artists on the imaging system.

Atari Closes Lombard

Atari closed their Lombard, IL offices, and returned all business activities to the west coast headquarters. This concludes a transfer of emphasis that began earlier this year, when Atari moved all executives back to Silicon Valley from the Chicago suburb, leaving only a handful of personnel to work on sales and distribution of the Lynx portable video game system.

With the September closing of the Illinois office, all Atari business will be centered in California.

Absolute Buys Imagineering

In a move that reflects the gaming industry's trend toward consolidation, Absolute Entertainment, Inc. acquired Imagineering, Inc., a top Nintendo software developer since 1986. Some of Imagineering's most recent cartridges were based on **Jeopardy, The Simpsons, Home Alone 2: Lost in New York,** and **Barbie.**

Garry Kitchen, CEO and President of Absolute, explained why his company purchased Imagineering: "As Absolute grows, we feel it is prudent to become a full service operation and control the resources that create our product line. The acquisition of Imagineering solidifies Absolute's position ..."

The next Imagineering title from Absolute will be **Amazing Tennis** for both Super NES and Sega Genesis.

EA, Victor Musical In Joint Venture

Electronic Arts and Victor Musical Industries of Japan have started a joint venture to develop and publish software for the Japanese video, computer, and CD game markets, in a move that marks EA's continuing expansion into international gaming.

Electronic Arts Victor, as the new company is dubbed, will first translate EA products into Japanese for play in the Island Nation. It also is starting development on original titles for play on Sega Genesis, Super NES, NEC 9481, MS-DOS, FM Towns, and CD platforms.

Thanks to the new venture, Japanese players will stuff their holiday stockings this year with top Genesis titles **John Madden Football 92, Electronic Arts Hockey, Road Rash,** and **Team USA Basketball.**

Sierra, Virgin Settle KQ Disagreement

Sierra On-Line and Virgin Games reached a friendly settlement in their disagreement over the mention of **King's Quest** in Virgin's ads and packaging for **The Legend of Kyrandia.**

Virgin agreed to place stickers on the **Kyrandia** boxes, with a disclaimer indicating that the **King's Quest** games are not in any way related to **The Legend of Kyrandia.** This disclaimer will also appear in three future advertisements.

ESPN Complains About EASN

It's a battle of logos. ESPN filed a complaint against Electronic Arts in the United States District Court, New York City, alleging claims based on EA's brand name and logo, EASN (Electronic Arts Sports Network). ESPN is seeking monetary damages and an

injunction against further use of the logo.

EA uses the logo for all of its sports games.

"We believe the EASN campaign unfairly exploits the goodwill and reputation of ESPN's well-known trademarks," explained ESPN's counsel, Ed Durso.

Spokesmen for Electronic Arts expressed surprise at the action, and promised swift evaluation of the claim.

Electronic Arts also indicated that it is currently involved in discussions that may lead to future business between the two companies.

Tandy Launches VIS

Tandy Corp. launched its new CD-ROM player for sale in their own stores, and licensed the product to Zenith and other, as yet unnamed consumer operations. The interactive multimedia system format, VIS (Video Information System), is intended for family entertainment and education. It's packed with *Compton's Multimedia Encyclopedia*, which for this platform also includes the complete *Websters Intermediate Dictionary,* and retails for around $700.

The VIS system connects to a standard TV, and comes with stereo connections, infra-red remote control, microprocessor and a CD-ROM drive. Over 100 titles from about 50 software companies are scheduled for this holiday season. Included are 26 children's reading development and classic literature titles, and 16 other learning titles.

First VIS Titles Scheduled:

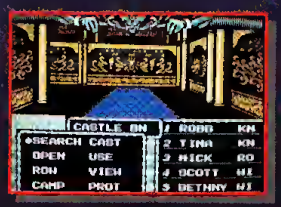
- **Inspector Gadget,** Azeroth, Inc.—Children and young adults help the bumbling cartoon character save the world from M.A.D.
- **The Manhole** and **Rodney's Funscreen,** Activision—Fantasy exploration games for children.
- **Just Grandma and Me,** Broderbund—The first of the Living Books series.
- **Chuck Yeager's Air Combat,** Electronic Arts—Yeager co-pilots the player through World War II, Korea or Vietnam.
- **Our House,** Context Systems, Inc.—Children explore everyday objects in the home, hosted by characters from the Family Circus comic strip.
- **Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective,** Vols. I & II, Icom Simulations—Two interactive movie mysteries, with the gamer as the great detective.
- **Sail With Columbus,** Parallax Publishing—Pilot across the Atlantic to the New World in the 15th century.
- **Meeting of Minds With Steve Allen,** JLR Group—Discover the minds behind the masks in a round-table game show.
- **Loom,** LucasArts Games—the popular fantasy adventure with full, lip-sync voices and animation.
- **Future Classics Collection,** Saddleback Graphics—Includes: **Tankbattle, Diet Riot, Diskman, Blockalanche** and **Lost'n Maze.**
- **Victor Vector and Yondo #1: The Vampire's Coffin,** Sanctuary Woods—Battle beasts to bring Dracula's coffin to the Museum of Fantastic Phenomena.
- **The Secrets of Hosea Freeman,** Top Ten Software—The ghost of an old sea captain helps players find out why he suddenly stopped whaling, in a game developed with the National Audobon Society.
- **The 7th Guest,** Virgin Games—Ambitious multimedia fantasy drama.
- **Kings Quest V, Space Quest IV,** Sierra—King Graham's latest adventure, and Roger Wilco's space comedy.

Feel the Power. Experience the Magic!

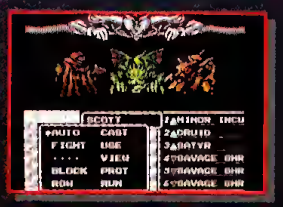
For those who choose to brave dark, foreboding dungeons, unravel riddles as ancient as time, and clash with sword and magic against hideous beasts and tactful villains...

Welcome to the land of Varn!

Lead your party of hand-picked adventurers into this enchanted world! From the beast-ridden caverns of the underworld, to the majestic castles of the land, you'll travel in search of clues to unlock the Secret of the Inner Sanctum!

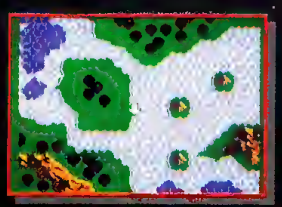


Beware, brave warriors, for the labyrinths of Vorn are heavy with the smell of Doom.



Train your Sorcerers and Clerics in over 96 spells of destruction ond defense!

Discover over 250 weapons and items os you venture through the lond of Varn!



Detailed Map of Varn Included!

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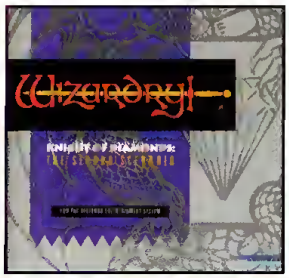
What to Do In Wizardry II

A hintbook can help NES players lost in the dungeon. ASCII's **All of Wizardry II,** a 76-page illustrated hintbook by Benny Matsuyama & Parker A. Davis, helps interpret the mystery of **Wizardry: Knight of Diamonds.**

Rather than a strategic walkthrough, the booklet gives advice to travelers in and about Llylgamyn. It leads with a brief history of the domain, followed by recommendations for an exploration party, descriptions of races, monsters, equipment, treasures, and maps of the dungeon levels. Many color illustrations and several pages of charts provide data for party personnel, monsters and weapons. This book is very helpful.



Black Hole Swallows Americans In Japan CD-ROM Tourny

The editorial press attending a Japanese electronics convention vied for honors on **Black Hole Assault,** Bignet's new Sega-CD due for pre-Christmas release in the USA. Three US editors (Ed Semrad from *EGM*, Wes Nihei from *Gamepro*, and Andy Eddy from *VGCE)* participated in the tournament that also included players from Japan's top game magazines, but all three Americans lost in the first round. First and second place honors went to editors from *Marukatu PC-Engine*, and third place went to an editor from *Beep Mega-Drive* .

Black Hole Assault is a save-the-earth scenario that puts the gamer in control of Cybernetic Anthromorphic Machines, in a quest to destroy the enemy base.

The illustrious event took place in Sapporo, the headquarters of Bignet's parent company, Micronet.

Dirk Dares Another Dragon

Dirk the Daring must again tread the puzzling paths of rescue in **Dragon's Lair III: The Curse of Mordread,** (ReadySoft/Amiga, Atari ST,

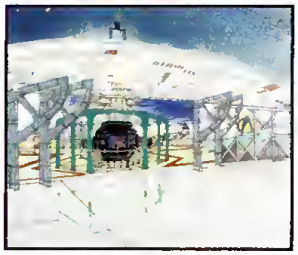
DOS, and color or monochrome Macintosh systems). This time, Dirk faces the witch Mordread, out to take revenge on him for destroying her brother Mordroc by trapping Dirk's family (Daphne and her children) in the Vortex of Eternity.

ReadySoft used full-screen animation and digitized sound to create this installment of Dirk's continuing adventure.

Where No Gamers Have Gone Before...

Thanks to licensing agreements between Paramount Pictures, Edison Brothers, and Spectrum Holobyte, gamers will be able to walk the decks of the Starship Enterprise sometime in 1993.

Paramount Pictures has agreed that Edison Brothers Entertainment will develop virtual reality centers based around *Star Trek: The Next Generation.* Edison, whose Horizon Entertainment division is the exclusive distributor of Virtuality in the US, will build mall-based entertainment centers that include restaurants, merchandise, and virtual reality simulations.



The centers will let players choose a game scenario and the character to portray, then visit the bridge, holodeck, transporter room and engineering aboard the famous starship. The **Star Trek** attractions will use software by Spectrum Holobyte, the company that holds the license to develop entertainment products based on the popular *Star Trek: The Next Generation* T.V. show.

Spectrum HoloByte Sold

Spectrum Holobyte has purchased back all oustanding shares of the company, severing all ties with the Robert Maxwell family which previously held stock through SWICO, a charitable trust that was the parent company to Sphere. In addition, the company obtained $4 million of equity funding to finance future development and marketing of entertainment products.

Gilman Louie, President and CEO of Spectrum Holobyte, explained the impact this move has on his company. "This financing positions the company to work with our new partners [see associated story] in bringing products and technologies to the industry. We see interactive entertainment encompassing many technologies...including the consumer electronics, communications, entertainment and computer industries."

DRAGONS & WIZARDS... OH MY!

Features:

- Brilliant, Breath-Taking 16-Bit Graphics And Animation
- Battery Back-Up Stores Up To 15 Individual Games
- Booming, Orchestral Stereo Sound Hightens Game-Play
- 25 Unique Weapons, Armors, and Magical Instruments
- A Dramatic Storyline Of Epic Proportions

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Bard's Tale IV Gets Books, Boardgame

Through contracts with Electronic Arts, Grenadier has completed *Bard's IV,* a boardgame based around EA's famous fantasy role-playing game, to be produced in a basic version with cardboard figures, and a deluxe set with pewter figures. Both should be available early in 1993. Grenadier also has future plans to produce lead miniatures and additional modules.

Baen Books plans three novels around the computer game, the first of which is already available. *Castle of Deception* by Mercedes Lackey shares locations and the history of the **Bard's Tale** world.

Origin Forges New Territory

They're practicing forgery down in Texas! Don't call the Rangers, 'cause it's all on the up-and-up, and the finished product is just as good as the original. **Forge of Virtue**, an add-in disk for Origin's **Ultima VII: The Black Gate**, expands the available territory within the game. "It's different from an add-on because it doesn't just pick up where the story left off," said Richard Garriott, Origin's creative director and the creator of the Ultima series. "A new land will rise from the seas of Brittania. No matter how deep you are into **Ultima VII** (or even if you've finished it) suddenly you have another place to go, with quests of its own."

Forge of Virtue also updates **Ultima VII** to its latest released version and makes minor code corrections. An additional meg of hard disk space is required.

Add-On Boosts TG-16 Power

Turbo Technologies, Inc., released a Super System Card that increases the memory on the TurboGrafx-CD component from 64K to 256K which permits TurboGrafx-16 players with the add-on TurboGrafx-CD to play the expanded Super CD games.

The card, which must be purchased directly from TTI, will be available by itself for $65. For $95, it comes with a Super CD that includes **Bonk's Adventure**, **Bonk's Revenge** and **Gate of Thunder.**

The new card will ship in December 1992.

LINKS 386 Pro

Rivaled only

This all new LINKS 386 Pro version of our award-winning LINKS golf game offers many dramatic improvements that make playing LINKS 386 Pro more enjoyable – and gives you exciting new golfing possibilities!

Super VGA Graphics and 386 Power!

The new *LINKS 386 Pro,* featuring Harbour Town Golf Links, is the first golf game specifically designed for the graphic capabilities and computing power of your personal 386/486 computer system. SUPER VGA 256-color graphics at 640x400 resolution display breathtaking views of LINKS Championship Courses. Your friends won't believe that your computer looks so good!

A lot of listening went into LINKS 386 Pro.

Many of the new features and improvements were added in response to direct requests from LINKS users like you! An exciting new feature is our Unique Computer Opponent. Play a round of golf and save your game. The new *LINKS 386 Pro* recorded every shot you made. Send your game off to your buddy and he can play against you right on the screen, shot for shot, as if you were right there next to him! We've also included pre-recorded games from worthy opponents, statistics, a variety of game play modes and much, much more.

Texturing of fairways, rough, sand, and other surfaces adds an extra level of realism.

Male and female golfers.

You can use any of the 7 existing LINKS courses or upgrade your favorite course to the Super VGA version.

Over 345 combinations of Viewing Windows.

With the new *LINKS 386 Pro* you're not stuck with just one standard viewing window. With a few clicks of your mouse you can split the screen giving you a real-time reverse view of your shot to the green or add a scaleable top-view that displays the flight of your ball. Scorecard, club distance chart, terrain profile and other panels give you the flexibility to display what you want to view while playing and you can change your viewing setup at anytime!

**Actual Links 386 Pro Super VGA Screens*

ACCESS SOFTWARE INCORPORATED
4910 W. Amelia Earhart Dr • SLC, UT 84116
(801)801-359-2900• FAX (801)596-9128

SPA Busts Illinois Pirate

The Software Publishers Association (SPA) sued TrendTec BBS, Bollingbrook, IL, for reportedly illegally distributing copyrighted software. Games made available to subscribers of the bulletin board service included Brøderbund's **Where in Europe is Carmen Sandiego?** and Sierra's **Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards.**

According to SPA, about 200 such programs, claimed by the sysop to be worth more than $100,000, were made available to subscribers for a $50 annual fee. The SPA downloaded a number of these in the course of its investigation before filing the lawsuit in Illinois District Court.

SPA estimates the BBS was responsible for the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars to the software industry.

Seek Wisdom: Boot Daily

"Quote-A-Day" brings an inspirational quote to the computer screen every time it's turned on, and could select a new one every day for almost 18 years. It's a feature of a specialized data base from Micro Computer Resources (Oakland, CA) called **Wisdom of the Ages** Version 5.1, which has more than 6,500 quotes from over 1,000 of history's greatest minds.

Entries are grouped into 81 different subjects. All quotes from a specific author may be viewed together, with biographical notes. The program also supports word search selection, and links by subject or Eastern and Western philosophies may be compared on any topic.

Malibu Comics Conquer Carts

Bignet USA signed a multi-product licensing and development contract with Malibu Interactive to produce games based on characters appearing in the Malibu Comic line. Current comic book titles include *Dinosaurs for Hire*, *Young Blood*, *Spawn* and *The Protectors*, but specific characters to be developed for video games have not yet been decided.

Bob Jacob, president of the new venture, whose development credits include the Cinemaware games, as well as **Evander Holyfield Boxing** and **Ex-Mutants** for the Genesis and **Wings II** for the SNES, will oversee product development for the new line of Genesis, Sega CD and SNES games.

by the game itself.

The Experience Continues...

The challenge doesn't end with Harbour Town. You can play each of the original LINKS Championship Courses (sold separately) with *LINKS 386 Pro*. Seven internationally-acclaimed golf courses on your desktop! Torrey Pines, Firestone South Course, Bay Hill Club, Pinehurst #2, Troon North, Dorado Beach, and Barton Creek with additional courses being released as fast as they are completed.

If you're a LINKS owner, you can purchase *LINKS 386 Pro* at a special introductory price. Call us today for more information.

1-800-800-4880

Call toll-free, 24-hours a day, Mon-Sat in the U.S. and Canada or visit your local software dealer

NEW!

New Features for Links 386 Pro!

•Seven different viewing windows, with over 345 different combinations. Improved club selection feature. • Wide, panoramic views giving you a better feel for the course. • Statistics recorded for each player, game and course, with optional print out. • A "Saved Shot" feature. • Scaleable "Top View". • "Profile View" which shows changes in elevation between the ball and the pin. • All new sounds! Supports SoundBlaster, SoundBlaster Pro, Adlib and other compatible sound cards & RealSound. • Improved swing indicator for more realistic putting. • Male or female golfers, with 10 different shirt colors to choose from. • Spectacular texturing of fairways, rough, sand, water not offered in other golf games.

What Reviewers Are Saying about LINKS 386 Pro:

Strategy Plus:

"...with LINKS 386 Pro, *Access* has not so much pushed back the 'envelope' as redefined the term 'simulation.' Right from the opening screen it's clear that something special is happening here."

"...represents a new generation of computer game. Just play it and love it."

PC Entertainment:

"...for sheer, unadulterated realism, no golf simulation equals the performance of LINKS 386 Pro."

"...if you're serious about golf simulations, treat yourself to LINKS 386 Pro. And if you don't own a 386 to run it on, you've finally got a real good reason to lay out the money for an upgrade."

Computer Gaming World:

"...if you have a fast 386 or 486, think of LINKS 386 Pro as a Ferrari or a Corvette."

"...the ground texturing is dramatically realistic."

Top Coin-Ops of July, 1992

Figures courtesy of Replay Magazine, based on an earnings-opinion poll of operators.

Best Upright Videos

1. *Streetfighter II:CE* by Capcom
2. *Mortal Kombat* by Williams
3. *Terminator 2* by Midway
4. *Sunset Riders* by Konami
5. *Captain America* by Data East
6. *Turbo Out Run* by Sega
7. *Double Axle* by Taito
8. *Steel Gunner* by Namco
9. *Super High Impact* by Midway
10. *Space Gun* by Taito

Best Deluxe Video

1. *X-Men* by Konami
2. *Steel Talons* by Atari
3. *Race Drivin'* by Atari
4. *Final Lap 2* by Namco
5. *Hard Drivin'* by Atari
6. *Rad Mobile* by Sega
7. *Road Riot* by Atari
8. *G-Loc* by Sega
9. *Cisco Heat* by Jaleco
10. *Galaxy Force* by Sega

Best Coin-Op Software

1. *World Heroes* by SNK
2. *Street Fighter II* by Capcom
3. *Aero Fighters* by McO'River
4. *King of Monsters 2* by SNK
5. *Wrestlefest* by Technos
6. *Fatal Fury* by SNK
7. *G.I. Joe* by Konami
8. *Raiden* by Fabtek
9. *Rim Rockin' B-Ball* by Strata
10. *Undercover Cops* by Irem

Top Selling PC Games for July, 1992

The list of top-selling computer software was compiled by PC Research of Washington, DC., based on sales data received from Software Etc., Electronics Boutique, Babbages and Waldensoftware.

TOP MS-DOS Games

1. *Aces of the Pacific,* Sierra
2. *Links,* Access
3. *Indiana Jones:Fate of Atlantis,* LucasArts
4. *Powermonger,* Electronic Arts
5. *Civilization,* MicroProse
6. *Hardball III,* Accolade
7. *Gunship 2000,* MicroProse
8. *F117A Stealth Fighter 2.0,* MicroProse
9. *Dagger of Amon Ra: Laura Bow II,* Sierra
10. *Dark Seed,* Cyberdreams

Top MS-DOS Education Games

1. *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego,* Broderbund
2. *Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing,* Software Toolworks
3. *Where in the USA is Carmen Sandiego,* Broderbund
4. *New Math Blaster Plus,* Davidson
5. *Playroom,* Broderbund
6. *Algeblaster Plus,* Davidson
7. *Body Works,* Automap
8. *Mickey's ABCs & Sound Source Pak,* Disney
9. *Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego,* Broderbund
10. *Your Personal Trainer for the S.A.T.,* Davidson

A Look to the East

by Marc Camron

Livin' Large

In a world where bigger seems to mean better, game companies are pushing the memory envelope to new lengths. Just as 8 Meg games were becoming the standard, **Star Control** and **Street Fighter II** opened up the world of 12 and 16 Meg monsters.

While companies seem to be competing to see who can come up with the biggest and best fighting games (**Rushing Beat II** - Jaleco, 12 Meg; **Streets of Rage II** - Sega, 16 Meg; **Ranma 1/2 II** - Masyia, 12 Meg) the other end of the video game world is benifiting from this new attitude as well.

Role-playing games do not rely on the large characters, complicated graphics and amount of animation that fighting games do. The story is key to a good RPG, and the longer and more complicated, the better.

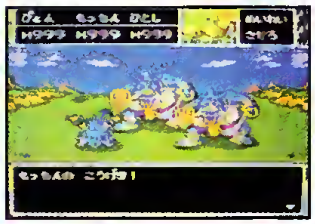
Now, new RPGs are being developed to take advantage of this added memory.

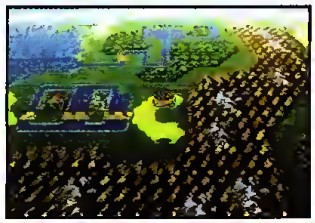
Dragon's Quest V (Dragon Warrior in the United States) was released in Japan at the end of September. This 12 Meg game continues the ultra-popular 8-Bit series. **Dragon's Quest IV** was so popular that people camped out waiting to get copies. **Dragon's Quest V** was no different, and promises to set sales records across Japan.

Those records should hold until **Final Fantasy V** (sequel to the U.S. **Final Fantasy II**) arrives early in '93. At 16 Meg, **Final Fantasy V** sports a quest much greater in length and magnitude than its predecessor. There is some question as to whether or not the game will ever be seen in the States. It seems that Square Soft is waiting to see how well their original effort, **Final Fantasy Mystic Quest**, sells before committing to any more installments of the series.

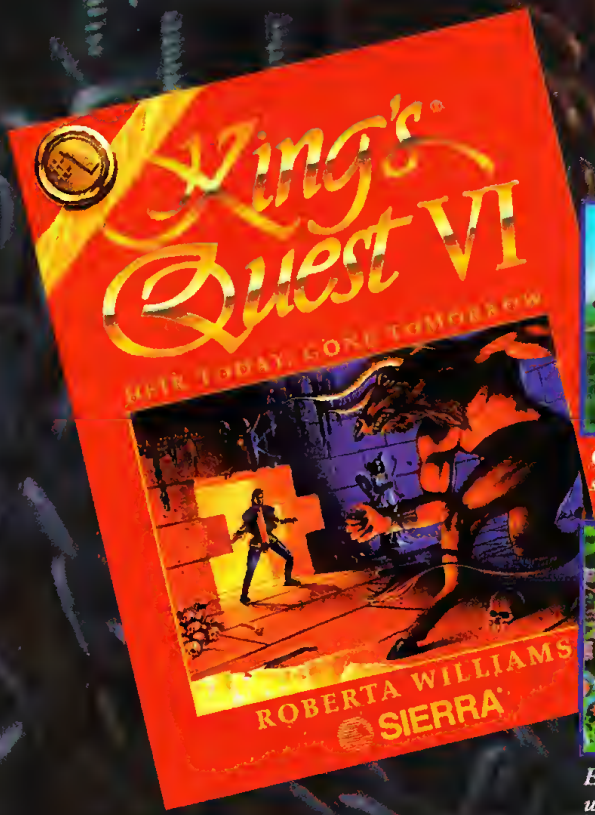
Genesis owners need not despair. The 16 Meg **Land Stalker** is also expected to show in Japan, early next year. **Land Stalker** is the sequel to **Shining Force**, the 12 Meg follow up to **Shining in the Darkness**. **Shining Force** is expected to show in the U.S. sometime next year.

With the advent of CD games, memory will cease to be of concern in the future, but for now, companies are content in their game of one-upmanship. As long as they program to beat "the other guy," players will benefit from the bigger and better games more than ever before.





The most popular computer game series of all time... ...Now, the best chapter yet.



Can you guide Alexander through a series of mysterious Islands?

Meet characters as curious as the countries they inhabit.

Explore the animated garden on the whimsical Isle of Wonder.

Encounter enemies and rivals bent on stopping you at any cost.

Bold Characters, Bold Design

A shipwrecked prince must find his way across a series of islands in search of a princess in peril. You'll need all your wits and imagination to overcome the gauntlet of baffling puzzles and fantastic creatures that block you on your quest.

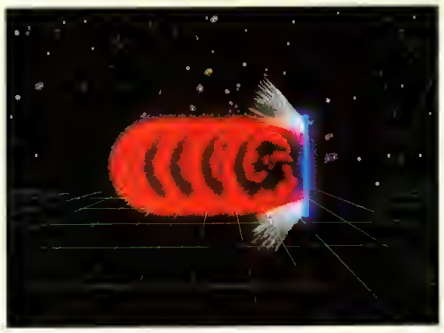
In this richly detailed game of discovery and adventure, every choice you make can affect your future options and the attitudes of the many characters you'll encounter. Depending on your skill and the paths you follow, your adventure can end in many different ways. Nearly half of the possible events are optional!

Filled with deeper puzzles, more fantastic creatures, and a moving saga of romance and adventure, *King's Quest VI* is a mysterious and magical adventure for the entire family.

SIERRA®

Excellence in Adventure Gaming.

To get your copy now, call:
1 (800) 326-6654



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TALES FROM THE FLIPSIDE

by Jay Carter

A couple of issues back, when we launched this column, we chronicled the historical evolution of coin-op video games. The reasoning behind this was to provide a starting point so that each of you could put in perspective why we're seeing the types of game themes and play action that are currently available.

Well, admittedly there's much more to the coin-op scene than just video games, although that might be a statement bordering on sacrilege for many game enthusiasts. However, over the past few years, the creative geniuses behind the scenes have been designing a wide range of entertainment equipment - redemption, novelty attractions, pinball - that have all, admittedly, been heavily influenced by the dramatic inroads made by video games. In this space we propose to give you the developments, across the board, as they unfold because there just might be something we highlight that will catch your interest and broaden your game playing sensibilities.

One area, specifically, that has reemerged to the forefront in popularity is pinball. Many events have taken place to reshape the destiny of this coin-op art form, not the least of which has been the further advancement and application of cutting edge technology. This has resulted in the games borrowing, at least subliminally, from what has been the core essence of video.

Not that many years ago, pinball was just some wonderful artwork along with sound effects and flashing lights, with the only constant being the use of flippers and a silver ball rolling and rocketing around a playfield. If this is what you were looking for as a challenge, it was more than sufficient. A never ending array of different playfield layouts and the frequent innovative game features always managed to vex and beguile you. However, there was something missing, as pinball quickly learned, and a gradual transformation began to take place.

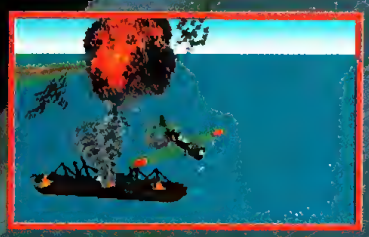
Video games have, for the longest time, provided skillful players the opportunity to enter their initials to herald that peak performance. With pinball, it had become some elusive identification with a set of numbers in a display flashing the threshold to overcome. Who was responsible for the high game was an unknown, unless it was one of the acknowledged sharpshooters at a local game room. Well, pinball changed. Although the ability to put in one's initials for the top five scorers might not seem like a big deal to the video fanatic, it was for the growing legion of self-professed pinball wizards. Personal gratification aside, it also meant that "ACE" or some other three letter champion was the top gun to beat.

Additionally, there was something much more seminal that began to unfold before our eyes during the last decade. Despite the fact that pinball graphics have always been a notable element of the games since its very beginnings, by and large, during the modern era, the artwork tended to only define the basic identity of a given machine. Not much else tied the entire package together as a cohesive whole.

Suddenly, this aspect also changed, because of video games in which storylines (real or imagined) were presented on screen. One

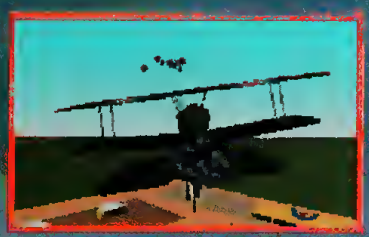
History records the evolution of man's journey to the skies... ...Now you can relive it.

Blast your way through dangerous, low-level attacks. (RBMB)



Sink enemy ships with torpedoes and dive bombs – if you can. (Aces of the Pacific)

Hang on as enemy fire rips through your cockpit. (WWII: 1946)



Take on the great Axis and Allied aces in one-on-one duels. (Red Baron)

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knew who the villains and heroes were, and what the objectives for success were in order to advance to higher and more difficult 'waves.' Pinball designers, with much of the same technology available to them, began to see a common vision. The evolutionary path entailed taking a basic theme and following it through from artwork to playfield features.

Some of the first examples of this included machines such as Williams Electronics' **Cyclone** in which an amusement park comes alive complete with a ferris wheel, calliope music, molded plastic ramps that emulate roller coasters, a revolving mystery wheel and spook house. In **Taxi**, pinball players don't just hit targets, they are a cabbie who picks up such passengers as Santa Claus, Gorby, Dracula and others, and takes them to the airport.

Bally's **Game Show** was just that - players are presented with the chance to win big prizes such as cars, boats, trips and a Showcase Bonanza maybe better suited to weekday morning quiz shows. Premier Technology gave us a wacky waterpark to explore in **Surf 'n Safari** where Rodney the Gator entertained all takers. Data East took pinball to its next logical extension, again looking at the direction video games were turning to, with a reliance on licensed themes that brought the games much more universal attention, thanks to such efforts as **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**, **The Simpsons** and big screen attractions such as **Hook** and **Lethal Weapon 3**.

Interestingly, as a further example of intermingling between pinball and video, there was the recent release of **Super Mario Bros.**, from Premier Technology, where Mario and Yoshi have been given a new medium through which to regale gamers. Maybe not by coincidence, pinball's renaissance might best be exemplified by a truly remarkable achievement that has just been announced. The millions of fans around the world of this game probably won't be surprised, but **The Addams Family** from Bally has just made history by becoming the best selling and most successful pinball machine of all time. Paying homage to the blockbuster movie, here is a game that incorporates speech by Gomez and Morticia (Raul Julia and Angelica Huston) as well as an electric chair, revolving bookcase, treasure vault, swamp, graveyard, train wrecks, the Mamushka, Fester's Tunnel Hunt, Cousin Itt and an appearance by Thing himself, who ably lends a hand to all the fun.

Pinball has changed to represent an extremely fertile area not just for game development, but also game playing enjoyment. With the world getting ready for **Cue Ball Wizard** from Premier, along with a ticket-dispensing **Super Mario Bros., Mushroom World**, and **Star Wars** from Data East (games we'll be taking a closer look at next time around), there is still much to be said for originally-inspired themes as evidenced by the latest release from Williams called **Fish Tales.**

Fish Tales will have you angling for the big one as you try to catch fish and 'stretch the truth' of the ones that don't get away. What you might notice first is the unique fishing rod grip shooter that launches a ball into play, the revolving bait-casting reel on the playfield, fish-finder and a flapping 12-pound walleye mounted on top of the game. In addition, no fishing trip would be complete without a boat, and **Fish Tales** features one in the center of the playfield for those wanting to score big points through Port and Starboard shots. There's also a special video game mode, something that is becoming much more common with newer pinball machines. If, after all this, you feel that you still can't get enough pinball to keep you satisfied, more events are coming your way to keep you flipping for more. In Chicago, on November 12th through the 15th, the Ramada O'Hare will be the site for Pinball Expo '92 where attendees will be able to take a tour of the Premier Technology pinball factory, sit in on a full program of seminars, sample an exhibit floor with classic games from days gone by as well as the latest creations and, if the mood strikes and the talent is there, compete in the **Flip Out** pinball world championship. For more information, just call 1-800-323-FLIP.

For those of you who feel you are excellent with the flippers, get your wizardry ready for the third annual PAPA (Professional and Amateur Pinball Association) international championship competition to be staged in New York City on February 12th to 15th, with details of the event available by calling 212-247-3725. Or there's the AMOA-IFPA (International Flipper Pinball Association) Third Annual World Pinball Championships to travel to in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, scheduled to take place May 21st to 23rd, 1993. Information on this extravaganza can be had by calling 414-263-0233. These last two organizations also support pinball leagues and if you think this is a concept you'd like to learn more about, they can get you the basics.

For coin-op players, the world doesn't only revolve around pinball - the video games are an obvious draw to die-hard gamers. In fact, Namco has an awesome sit-down motorcycle simulator called **Suzuka 8 Hours Endurance Race** that you should be watching for. Virtual reality gets a new twist with the release of Sega's all new **Virtual Racing** featuring well-crafted polygon graphics and and excellent scrolling features. Hardy fighting game enthusiasts should find themselves challenged to the max with SNK's latest, **Art of Fighting**, and **World Heroes** from software developer Alpha Denshi. We'll be looking at these hot games and much, much more as we continue to explore the excitement of coin-op. So until next time, keep playing and have some fabulous fun.

— Jay Carter

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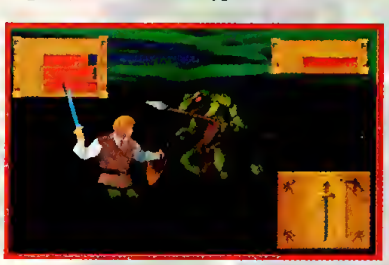

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Gaming On Line...

A Look At The Sierra Network

By Russ Ceccola

The Sierra Network
1200/2400 baud (2400 necessary for faster graphics games)
$12.95 for 30 hours/$2 for each additional hour
Pricing package deals available; certain lands extra $4 fee

The Sierra Network (TSN) is barely two years old, but has already attracted a fiercely loyal legion of over 12,000 users. Nationwide access only began in October 1991. Prior to this date, users were beta-testing Californians, but now the user base stretches to Alaska, Canada and even Hawaii.

Ken Williams, president of Sierra On-Line, started TSN with some of his key programmers as a constant companion for senior citizens, to talk and play games (bridge in his grandmother's case) with people all over the country. TSN is still the only nationwide network with fun as its sole purpose. It boasts an electronic neighborhood of people of all ages, races and educational backgrounds who play games together, send mail, and chat in a colorful graphic environment. It furthers the approach of the Commodore 64 Quantum Link network of years ago, but on IBM PC compatible computers.

TSN Release 2.0 was unleashed late this summer and has more fun, games and features than any of the previous versions of the system. The main screen for TSN is a map of an online "town" that represents the "lands" within TSN and basic user functions. After sign-on, users can check online mail in the mail center, access account information and special offers with the TSN billboard, look at and leave bulletin board messages at the BBS booth, search for a specific person at the INFO stand or travel to any of the major game/chat areas (currently SierraLand, LarryLand, Town Hall/"constant companion" area, or the online RPG, The Shadow of Yserbius). All it takes is a click of the mouse on the map icons to enter one of the game/chat areas or user function screens. A built-in transporter on the main map takes users to different lands as they're added to the network. TSN beats all other online networks with its basic monthly charge of $12.95 for 30 hours and optional fees of $2 for mail services and $4 each for access to LarryLand, SierraLand and Yserbius. There are also other pricing packages better-suited to heavy users. TSN is quite simply the most fun and cheapest network available.

LarryLand, Yserbius, the overall system and map, and some games in SierraLand are new to **Release 2.0**, but the basic approach to each land and the network will be familiar to users of previous incarnations of the network. Also new to **Release 2.0** is the ability to create a different personality/picture for each land. Users can put together up to six portraits/personae, popularly known online as "toons," from component face and clothing parts, choose skill levels for the local games, and enter a list of hobbies/interests.

Therein lies the personality and attraction of the network. Other users can look at your portrait and information by clicking on a box with your name/online handle in the waiting room, after which they can talk to you, invite you to games, or leave BBS mail for you. TSN users are truly members of an online community because it's easy to meet friends, lovers, enemies and playing partners. People have actually met electronically on TSN and later met and married in real life. Social gatherings of TSN users are also common.

TSN's graphic interface encourages creativity and role-playing to the fullest. Most users adopt a specific online handle, toon and text message colors, to help personify their online activities.

The Town Hall contains eight waiting rooms where users congregate to chat, attend real-time conferences or play games. Each land has several waiting rooms, although the number, games, options and toons are different. LarryLand is meant for adults and has password access for concerned parents. Its toons have that goofy, **Leisure Suit Larry** look. SierraLand has childlike toons, the Town Hall has standard toons, and Yserbius boasts the most realistic faces.

The Town Hall includes all of the popular TSN games from past versions like chess, checkers, bridge, cribbage, hearts and backgammon. SierraLand boasts 3D Tic-Tac-Toe, a fun strategy game called Boogers, a sophisticated paint program called Graffiti, a math quiz, paintball, miniature golf and a smooth, fast-action, dogfight version of **Red Baron**, the popular flight simulator. LarryLand features more adult games like blackjack, slot machines, roulette, poker and special games in the LarryLand bar. Yserbius is a game unto itself: the only online first-person dungeon RPG that has all the options and game play of traditional RPGs with the spirit and look of the **Wizardry, Eye of the Beholder** and **Dungeon Master** series.

It is easy to get lost for hours in the fun on TSN. It's not uncommon for users to spend two or three hours a day online. All of the games are graphics-based and have intuitive point-and-click interfaces. Online help is available for all functions; no manual is necessary.

So go out and see what North American network fans are crazy about. Call 1-800-SIERRA1 if you have any questions and say "Hi" to me (RCCola) when you sign up!

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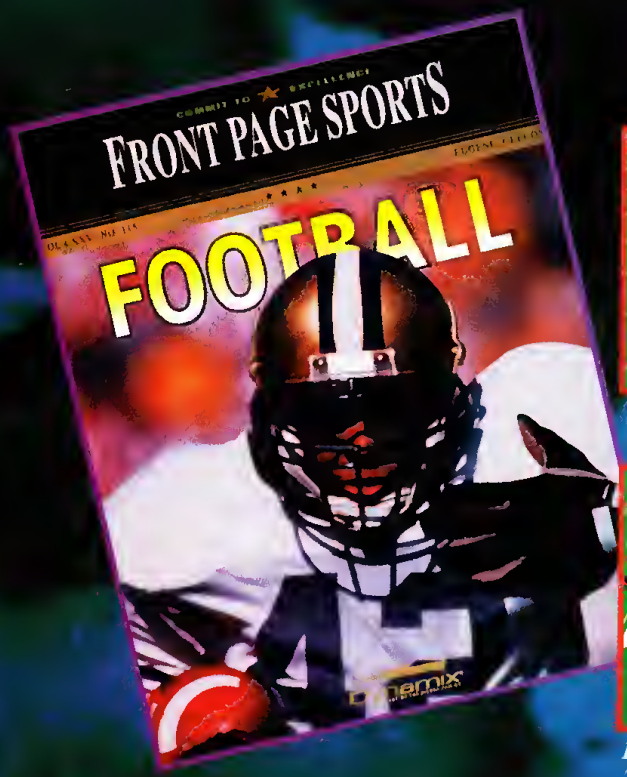

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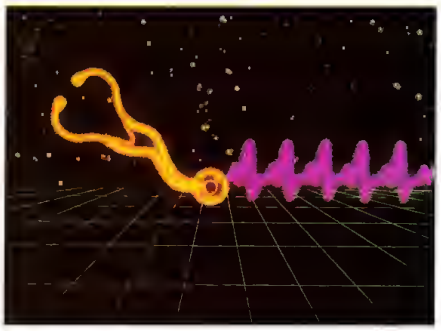

GAME DOCTOR

Ask A Question, Get an Answer

We'll start things off this issue with a question about one of the great cult favorite video game systems of all time.

Q: Can you please give me any information on the Vectrex hardware and software?

Carlzo Cardwell
Millington, TN

A: *The Vectrex game system has not been available at retail level for over half a decade, yet a month does not pass without the Doc receiving several letters asking about this legendary piece of hardware.*

The reason gamers remember this stand-alone system so well lies with the monitor which was sold as one of its component parts. This monitor was of the advanced vector graphics type. The early vector graphics monitors were very popular in coin-op games, because although they could not initially produce color (that came later), what they could do was create amazingly bright line drawings. And, unlike then-current raster technology, vector graphics lines held a consistent brightness from point to point.

The arcade company most strongly associated with vector graphics was Cinematronics, although it was Atari that produced the biggest hits, with its own version of vector technology called Quadrascan. Vector games include ***Asteroids***, ***Battlezone*** *and* ***Star Castle****. Color was added letter in games such as* ***Tempest****.*

In any case, during the early 80s, at a point where coin-ops were on the verge of switching to color vector, the company GCE somehow found itself with a warehouse full of vector monitors from Hong Kong. The problem: what the heck do you do with a hundred thousand or so monitors capable of generating black & white images in a technology making a rapid transition to color? Some genius came up with the answer: sell them as part of a home video game system! The GCE Vectrex housed its electronic guts in an assembly underneath the monitor, similar to the current Macintosh configuration, with ROM cartridges and joypads plugged directly into the system's base.

Although Vectrex sales were nowhere near that of the TV-based game systems, it seems as if anyone who ever played one has carried the memory close to their heart ever since. Eventually, GCE sold the system, but it had already developed several interesting peripheral and related software was spotty, however, and the system was eventually abandoned in the mid-80s.

Since then, collectors have scoured flea markets and discount shops in hopes of finding Vectrex hardware and software. The Game Doc acquisition of some long-forgotten cache of Vectrexiana.

If ever a game system was "gone but not forgotten," it is undoubtedly the Vectrex.

Q: I remember two games from my youth (I'm 24 now), whose names escape me:

The first game was similar to **Defender** and **Stargate**, but the ship had 360 degree movement and firing (courtesy of a control paddle rather than a joystick), and its smart bombs were called Doomsday Devices. It was a detailed, involved game, with a voice to warn the player when the ship's supplies ran low.

The other game came out sometime between **Pong** and **Space Invaders**, about the same time as the arcade light-gun skeet shooting games. Made by Atari, it was a wild auto racing game, and I believe it combined filmed footage with electronic graphics. The most noticeable thing about this game was that collisions resulted in a fiery explosion, and that scene never failed to scare the willies out of me.

Which leads me to ask: what are your memories of the old Opto/Electro/mechanical games of yesteryear? My brother and I played scads of them as kids but the last one I saw was resting in peace in the back of a now-defunct arcade, along with dead jukeboxes, cigarette machines, pinball tables and other arcade stuff. I dubbed it the Video Graveyard and it was like looking back on coin-op history. Stirring stuff...wish you could've seen it.

Thank you for your help!

Sean Wilkinson
Manitoba, Canada

A: *Don't thank the old Doc too quickly, youngster, because I've got to confess that both your entries had me tearing my remaining hairs out (at one point, I actually ran out and started on my beard). So, as I always do on these occasions, I rang up some guys who've been following the arcade scene even longer than me, including* Insert Coin Here *author Jay Carter and Steve Epstein of the Broadway Arcade, which trivia buffs may recall as the first establishment*

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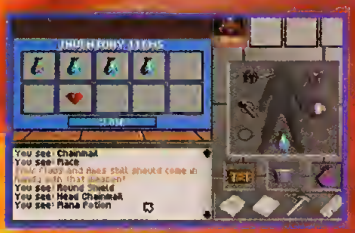

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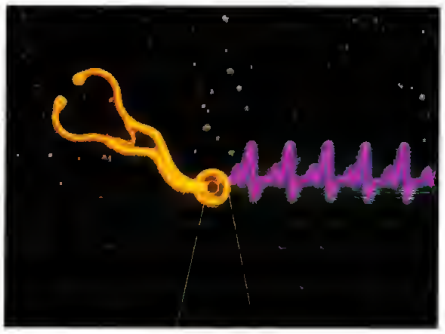

GAME DOCTOR

ever profiled in the very first electronic gaming magazine, over a decade ago (the same issue, by the way, in which the first Game Doctor column appeared). Let's look at your gaming recollections one at a time, Sean:

*1) A couple of possibilities here, though what threw us was the apparent contradiction between side-scrollers such as Williams' **Defender** and 360-degree movement games such as Atari's **Asteroids**. Bearing in mind that you must've been a pretty young gamer at the time and memory is a faulty mechanism at best, here are our candidates: **Space Wars**, the very first game from the legendary Cinematronics, which was a head-to-head game that offered players the choice between a wrap-around version and a single playfield with boundaries. Or perhaps it was the first four-color video game, Exidy's **Starfire**? Final guess: Midway's **Omega Race**. Do any of these titles ring a bell?*

*2) Okay, this is the ultimate stumper. First off, no one could recall such a game from Atari, unless it was **LeMans**, which Steve remembered because he once lent a copy of it to the folks at Saturday Night Live for a skit with Dan Ackroyd. Jay recalled a limited edition game from U.S. Billiards called **The Driver**, but it wasn't nearly as advanced as the game you describe and was not really a racing game but rather an early driving simulator. Actual footage was used in a few games in the '70s, such as Midway's **280-Z**, but it was black & white. Steve even recalled a pre-**Pong** piece called **Dale Auto Driver**, which he remembers mostly because it constantly burned out.*

Otherwise, we couldn't come up with a game which fit all the specifics mentioned. Certainly if anyone out there can help us, it would be greatly appreciated.

Finally, the Doc also remembers several pre-video game arcade favorites. The classic was the driving game which consisted of a plastic car attached to a metal rod which was, in turn, connected to a steering wheel. By turning the wheel to the right, the metal rod to which the car was affixed moved in the same direction. Meanwhile, on screen, a player piano style, top-down roadway scrolled vertically. The object was to keep the plastic car aligned with the road. If the car left the road, the machine detected it and the car "crashed".

Then there was the submarine game where players peered through a periscope and fired torpedoes (actually a series of blinking lights) in hopes of sinking the little, plastic battleships. When a ship took a hit, the sound of an explosion was heard and the boat sank.

Those were the days, and I loved your description of the coin-op graveyard, but I suspect your memory of those early coin-ops may be slightly hazy.

Q: I own a Turbo Express but I am a little disappointed because some of the best TTI games are for the CD-ROM system. I want to know if TTI is designing some kind of adapter for the CD-ROM drive and the Turbo Express?

Charles Franklin Fernandez
Santa Clara, CA

***A:** Turbo Technologies, Inc. debuted fifty-plus new titles this past June at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show. Of those games, almost half were TurboChip format, with the rest either CD-ROM or the new Super CD format [see this issue's* Player's Guide *for more detailed information on this system]. So you still have quite a few new games to play on your Turbo Express.*

*As for a CD-ROM drive for your Express, however, nothing has been announced by TTI for this country. Now I hate to drive you nuts, Charles, but TTI expert and **EG** Senior Editor Marc Camron tells me that there is something similar to the product you are asking about, but it is only available in Japan. Called the LT (for LapTop), this clamshell-style unit costs approximately $700 in American currency, has a slightly larger screen than the Turbo Express, and accepts a CD drive, which is a separately-priced item. The whole shebang would probably cost under $1,000, and comes with the TV tuner built in. Hear my warning: even if you got your hands on an LT and CD drive through an import outlet, the TV will not pick up channels one, two or three.*

Q: Is it true that in the beginning, the Odyssey^2 and [Atari] 2600 really cost around $200?

Jason Davis
Bartlett, KS

***A:** Contrary to popular opinion, Jason, the Doc wasn't actually around "in the beginning," but I have it on pretty good authority that even by the Mesozoic period, electronic gaming was fairly primitive.*

Seriously, however, back in 1978, when Atari released the 2600 (VCS) and Magnavox shipped the Odyssey^2, they did list for approximately $200 each. But remember, when Sony debuted the first VCR, the Betamax, it cost around $1,000. Technology generally becomes cheaper the longer it's around, whether it's pocket calculators or digital wristwatches.

And that about wraps things up for this issue. Remember to send all questions, comments and corrections to:

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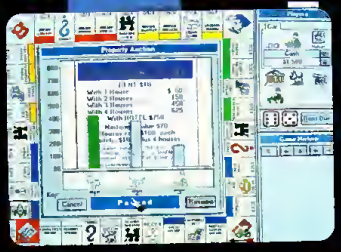

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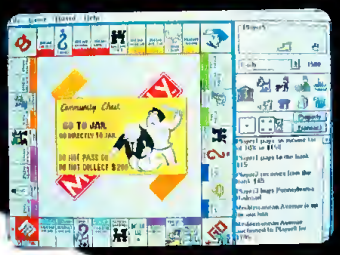

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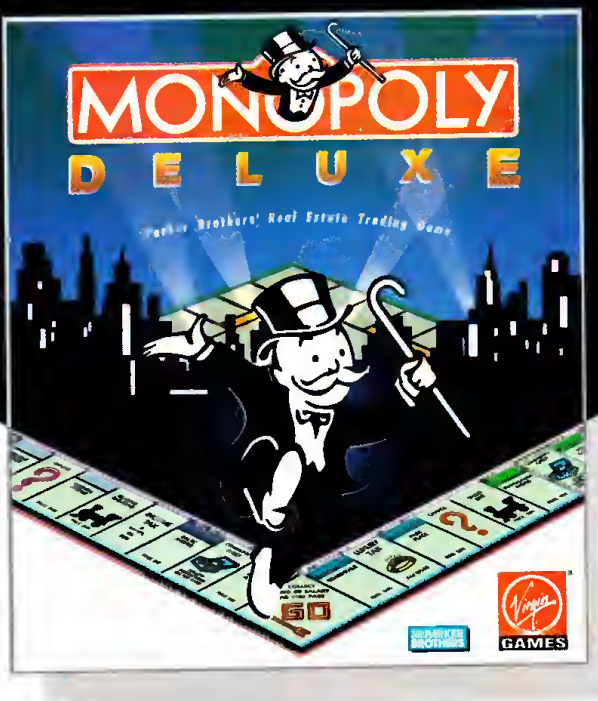

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PLAYERS' GUIDE TO GAME SYSTEMS

THE 16-BIT

The 16-Bit Systems

by Bill Kunkel

The Sega Genesis

The Genesis was the first major entry in the U.S. market's 16-Bit sweepstakes, and it blazed from its very first days. Sega had several advantages in this next-generation technology. For one thing, it had lost the 8-Bit war resoundingly to the NES. Now, that failure would work in its favor, as the balancing wheels of the free enterprise system fell into position. After all, it was the emergence of the Atari 5200, the successor to the incredibly popular 2600, that seemed to signal the beginning of the end for Atari. American consumers reacted poorly to the 5200, not only because of its inherent flaws, but because they felt betrayed; was Atari going to come back every few years, tell them to throw out their old hardware and software, and start up with a new system? Americans are used to the technological standards set by television, music systems and VCRs. In nearly half a century, television has offered one basic innovation: color, with the possibility of HDTV (High Definition TV) around the corner. Three-speed low-fidelity record players were the standard in sound systems for decades before stereo made an appearance. Since then, additional media, such as 8-track, cassette and CD have appeared, but the evolution in each case was gradual, over a period of years rather than months. Finally, the owner of a first-generation VHS format VCR can still play the latest tapes.

As Alvin Toffler explained in his book "Future Shock," technology has an ever-increasing halflife. The higher the level of technology, the quicker it becomes obsolete. Gamers had grown beyond the limits of 8-Bit video game technology, and Sega was in the right place at the right time. In failing to make the SMS a major success, it had alienated fewer potential consumers. Also, while Nintendo needed to cater to retailers infuriated at the thought of their 8-Bit inventories becoming worthless, Sega was perceived as a fresh face in the market.

Altered Beast was the first 16-Bit game released in the United States.

The Genesis roll-out was among the most impressive in memory, with a dozen or so superb games ranging from the arcade hit **Altered Beast** (which was packaged with the system) to the classic sports title, **Tommy Lasorda Baseball**. **Revenge of Shinobi**, **Herzog Zwei**, **Truxton** and many others hit store shelves, fueling the imaginations of gamers and impressing reluctant parents. Critics praised the system's superb stereo sound capability and heaped kudos on the built-in capabilities such as parallax scrolling, which allowed for the movement of different background objects at different speeds, thereby creating an illusion of depth.

After the impressive debut, Sega seemed to falter. Sega of Japan, the parent company, was anxious to sign

SYSTEM EXPLOSION

up as many third-party publishers as possible, remembering the success Nintendo had in the 8-Bit wars with third-party partners such as Capcom and Acclaim. The rush to bring aboard so many game producers, however, led to a pollution of product quality. Most of the smaller, Japanese companies turned out generic

Sonic 2 is Sega's big release planned for the Christmas of '92.

shooters and scrolling space combat contests of dubious quality.

By the Christmas of '91, however, Sega was riding high. Several of the third-party publishers, notably Electronic Arts, were producing state-of-the-art products for the Genesis, and Sega had the hit it always dreamed of in **Sonic the Hedgehog**. Moreover, Nintendo had finally released its long-awaited 16-Bit system, the Super NES, and early reaction was somewhat tepid. Many consumers were put off by Nintendo's refusal to market an 8-Bit adapter for the SNES while others were unimpressed by the system's initial software offerings.

Sega was the electronic hit of that holiday, but since the start of the New Year, the Genesis seems to have stalled somewhat. While Nintendo's library of impressive new games grows steadily, Sega seems to be treading water, dependent upon third-party publishers for exciting new software. Several of Sega's most promising titles, such as **Fantasia** and **Taz-Mania**, offered superb graphics but burdened them with awkward play mechanics. Many industry insiders also feel Sega is making a mistake by offering a CD-ROM drive [see the "Does CD Improve Your Video Games?"], which they feel will not work well in the 16-Bit format. Finally, users who have become accustomed to the Nintendo system's Mode 7 technology are asking why the Genesis can't do the same thing.

So, while they wait for the Sega CD drive to prove itself in the marketplace, Sega can only wait and hope that the release of **Sonic II** sparks new excitement into the strangely stalled Genesis.

The Super-Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES)

Nintendo was in an unaccustomed position.

For the first time since the NES burst upon the scene in the mid-70s, its success was a roadblock in the way of continued leadership of the

The 96 level Super Mario World is the pack-in for the Super Nintendo.

video game universe. As discussed above, many parents felt somehow betrayed when the kids, who had spent several years collecting expensive software (remember the Christmas when copies of **Double Dragon** for the NES were selling for $75?), suddenly announced they were ready to dump it all and move on to the next technological plateau.

Nintendo also suffered early indifference as a result of its rather frank policy toward producing an NES adapter for the SNES. Adapters are, after all, a very expensive convenience. They are invariably more

The SNES offers terrific scaling and rotation with Mode 7 programming.

compact versions of the earlier systems which use nothing but the new system's power source. Nintendo's reasoning was that most people already owned an NES; why did they want another one? If a user bought a SNES and wanted to continue playing NES games, they should keep the NES out and use it. A radical suggestion, perhaps, but a sound one. Nonetheless, most American NES owners viewed the no-adapter policy as a negative factor.

The system itself drew mixed reviews from critics. Most praised the now-famous Mode 7 capability, which allowed the SNES to perform such special effects tricks as rotation (making objects spin and rotate without graphic breakdown) and scaling (which allows on screen objects to grow as they come closer to the action) and rated the system's audio chip as extremely sound.

WHICH CONTENDER

SNES conversions of Genesis games seemed weak, however, especially since the long delay between the release of the Genesis and the SNES fueled consumer expectations of a system which would easily overshadow Sega's 16-Bit entry. The SNES did not blow away the Genesis. Nintendo realized that it would have to work slowly, eroding Sega's newfound number one status.

The title of Biggest Game of the Year stands with Street Fighter II.

Since Christmas of last year, in fact, when the Genesis was the leading 16-Bit video game system in the United States, the SNES has grown steadily, gaining momentum on Sega the old fashioned way: marketing and strong software. TV ad support has been consistent, with a special emphasis on **Mario Paint and Mouse**, a creativity program aimed at simultaneously introducing young users to icon-style electronic paintboxes and mouse control.

Third-party software has also been gaining strength, with **Super Star Wars** from LucasFilm/JVC a possible system-seller (in other words, a game so good that many consumers will buy the hardware in order to play it), and Capcom's **Street Fighter II**, not only a proven system-seller, but a genuine phenomenon as well.

Recently, Nintendo scored a significant public relations coup with the announcement of its software-based "FX" chip, which will provide a co-processor for the SNES, in addition to lots of cool, new special effects. And though Nintendo will not be getting into the CD-ROM sweepstakes until Christmas '93 [see "Does CD Improve Your Video Games?"], its reasoning was perceived as solid by many industry observers. Nintendo's main argument was that CD-ROM will not work well in the 16-Bit environment and in fact, its CD drive, when released, will upgrade the SNES to a 32-Bit machine. Nintendo is letting Sega experiment with the new technology once again, believing it can trump its competitor's hand.

The TurboGrafx-16 and Turbo Duo

The hardware on which the TurboGrafx-16 was based was actually the first 16-Bit video game system, Hudson Soft's PC Engine. The PC Engine dazzled Japanese and European gamers years before the Genesis (called the Mega Drive in Japan) debuted. By the time electronics giant NEC finally converted the system into the TurboGrafx-16 and rolled it out in the U.S., however, a lot of the steam had gone out of it. For one thing, many critics were divided as to whether it even qualified as a 16-Bit system. Certainly it used a 16-Bit video processor, but it's CPU was 8-Bit.

Keith Courage was the somewhat anemic pack-in with the TG-16.

The September 1988 rollout was a disaster. NEC then rushed to correct the technological inequity between it and the competition by introducing a CD-ROM drive for the TG-16. Most experts agreed, however, that the CD drive was premature and that its lim-

Things did pick up for the TG-16 with the release of Bonk's Adventure.

ited buffer space would make it impractical for many games.

Stewardship of the various Turbo systems was recently taken over by Turbo Technologies, Inc., or TTI, a joint venture between Hudson Soft and NEC. TTI has produced both a

Gate of Thunder really shows how good the TurboGrafx CD can be.

new CD drive, which resolves many of the technological problems faced by the first-generation system, and a new configuration, the Turbo Duo, which comprises the original system as well as the upgraded CD drive, that allows users to play the entire library of Turbo products. This made TTI the first video game company with three possible formats for the same system: Turbochip, CD-ROM and Super CD-ROM.

TTI almost certainly understands that a video game company need not be number one to show a profit, as long as overhead is kept down. Moreover, it has a trademark-quality character and series star in Bonk, and several impressive looking games on the way in both Turbochip and CD formats.

The Neo•Geo

SNK's Neo•Geo seemed to be one of the most unlikely products in electronic gaming history when it was introduced at the 1990 Summer CES. The system itself boasted technology identical to that which drove SNK's arcade version of the Neo•Geo: twin processors (a 16-bit 68000 and an 8-bit Z80), the ability to output audio from over a dozen different channels and, most amazingly, it was capable of running cartridges containing over 300 megabits of data.

The system's major drawback? Price. The Neo•Geo hardware originally sold for about $800 with individual software cartridges priced at two hundred dollars. Additionally, much of the software produced by SNK, the

Arcade enthusiasts swear by the capabilities of the Neo•Geo system.

has been generic, with nondescript, Japanese-sounding titles like **Top Players Golf** and **Baseball Stars Professional**.

Despite its drawbacks, however, SNK has hung tough, holding on to its 5% market share. The Neo•Geo is perceived by most observers as a sort of elite system for free spending video game mavens and, as such, has maintained a dedicated cult following. There have even been attempts to expose less financially secure fans to the joys of Neo•Geo gaming, including a deal in which a Neo•Geo and some software can be rented for a weekend for under $50. The rental arrangement is available through many videotape rental stores and is a perfect touch for that special party or get-together.

At this time, SNK offers a wide selection of games for the system, even though many of them are generic titles.

For those who want a true arcade system for use in their home, the Neo•Geo is the only choice. The advanced features and overall speed and playability give it a higher status than the SNES and Genesis. It must be remembered that what they player is paying for is graphics and sound, and not necessarily great games.

CAN YOU COUNT ON?

by Bill Kunkel

CD, a buzzword in electronic gaming circles for years, is rapidly becoming a reality in the world of computer entertainment software. Now it has set out to conquer video gaming.

The CD version of Exile is complete, unlike its Genesis counterpart.

CD-ROM is really just another format for storing computer code. What makes it special is the fact that it can hold tremendous amounts of data. Of course, sorting through all that information takes time, and real time access is even more important in the action-oriented video game field than it is in computer gaming. As a result, most CD-ROM games take a large program and break it up into much smaller chunks.

Each chunk is then loaded into the system's memory buffer, a kind of waiting room for data, where it can be retrieved at cartridge-like speed.

Video Games and CD History

CD-ROM has, of course, been available to video gamers for several years. NEC produced a CD drive for its TurboGrafx-16 soon after the video game system's release, and the system's new owner, TTI (a joint venture between the original creator of the PC Engine, Hudson Soft, an NEC), has produced both a new, improved CD operating system and a new configuration, dubbed the Turbo Duo. The Turbo Duo combines the TG 16 and CD drive to run Turbochip *and* Turbo CD software in both CD-ROM and Super CD formats.

TTI showed over 50 new titles at Summer CES, almost half of which will use CD-ROM or the new Super CD format. Games employing the Super CD technology include LucasArts' **Loom**, Icom's **Shape Shifter**, Hudson Soft's adaptation of the Jordan Mechner game **Prince of Persia**, and **Shadow of the Beast**, originally a Psygnosis computer game. Also unveiled at the Summer trade show was an adapter, scheduled for availability by the mid-

Prince of Persia will be one of the first Super CDs released by TTI.

DOES CD-ROM IMPROVE

dle of '93, which will allow the Super CD-ROM drive to interface with personal computers.

Sega will be releasing the arcade Cobra Command for their CD-ROM.

The Big Time

Nonetheless, the Turbo systems have never been a major force in the video game market. This Christmas, however, Sega will bring its Sega CD system for the Genesis to the American public. The Japanese version of the Genesis, the Mega Drive, has had CD-ROM capability for some time now, but the software selection for that system was extremely weak, helping to throw a wet blanket on the CD revolution across the Pacific. Sega of America has vowed, therefore, that it would not release a Genesis CD drive until it developed a strong library of supporting software.

The Sega CD, which has been styled to fit underneath the existing Genesis unit, has many impressive features, including a large capacity RAM buffer, and a high speed laser pickup drive mechanism designed to cut down on access time. It also boasts a coin-op quality, eight channel, digital stereo PCM sound source and an additional 68000-based 16-Bit CPU.

It will also function, independently, as an audio CD player and play CD&Gs.

Nintendo's Waiting Game

Nintendo, meanwhile, shocked the video game world when the announcement came that they would pass on marketing a CD drive for the SNES this Christmas, choosing to wait instead for Christmas '93, when it will offer a CD-ROM system which simultaneously upgrades the existing SNES into a 32-Bit game machine.

Nintendo argued that 16-Bit technology is insufficient to truly exploit the potential of CD-ROM and only by elevating the base system to 32-Bits does the technology become viable.

This matter will remain in question until Nintendo releases some more information on their system. At this time no one has seen the advancements, and the rumor of great games tomorrow means very little compared to the ability to play great games today.

CD and the Future of Video Gaming

Most industry observers agree that CD-ROM is an extremely attractive platform for video game publishers because of the comparatively low cost of CD as opposed to ROM chips, and the amount of memory developers can utilize. On the other hand, users have been educated to expect more from CD games than they do from cartridge software. And because of the enhanced memory capability of CD, most developers are anxious to add extra visuals, which consumes more research and development time.

Then, of course, there's the matter of sound. The earliest CD-ROM video games offered nice music, but it was, for the most part, non-interactive. Although there was undeniable novelty in listening to state-of-the-art music while video gaming, it is only through interactivity that electronic games attain maximum potential. Future CD game developers will have to realize that sound is one of the most underappreciated components of electronic gaming, and, with a little imagination, the possibilities of truly creative audio accompaniment can finally begin to be realized.

YOUR VIDEO GAMES?

THE FIVE BEST

Sega Genesis

• **Sonic the Hedgehog** (Sega) The best known and most popular cartridge for the Genesis also happens to be among the system's strongest titles. The success of **Sonic** also gave Sega the number one item on its corporate wish-list: a mascot, a visual image it could not only build sequels around, but also use as a company trademark, the way Nintendo has intelligently exploited Mario and his sibling, Luigi.

• **Toejam & Earl** (Sega) One of the best and most original games ever created, **Toejam & Earl** concerns the adventures of two winsome wanderers from a hip-hop homeworld who attempt to reassemble their shattered spaceship by scouring some two dozen areas full of mad dentists, practical joking boogie-men and a seemingly endless cast of the most hysterically funny antagonists in video game history.

• **Desert Strike** (Electronic Arts) This pseudo-three dimensional reworking of the old helicopter rescue game, **Choplifter** (Broderbund), uses state-of-the-art ray-drawn technology and other impressive visual wizardry to bring the Gulf War to video game life.

• **Mickey Mouse in the Castle of Illusion** (Sega) A delightful, side-scrolling romp through a series of brilliantly rendered worlds. Mickey must retrieve a series of magical items in order to secure Minnie's release from the clutches of a wicked witch. The Disney superstar runs, jumps, and throws stuff at a series of interesting enemies along the way.

• **John Madden Football** (Electronic Arts) One of the best and most revolutionary sports titles ever produced. Developed by Park Place, it was the first home sports simulation to employ the now famous into-the-horizon perspective that had already been explored by the Atari arcade game, **Cyberball**.

Other recommended titles include: **Herzog Zwei** (Sega), **Strider** (Sega), **NHLPA Hockey** (EA), **Road Rash** (EA).

SNES

• **Super Mario World** (Nintendo) Mario's first mission on the SNES is more like an extended memory 8-Bit game, but it is still a heck of a lot of fun. Sort of an Ultimate Mario game, it offers side-scrolling, running/jumping/shooting game fans a sample of what a 16-Bit system could do.

• **Super Star Wars** (LucasArts/ JVC) A magnificent video game recreation of the *Star Wars* epic combines the best-ever side-scrolling graphics in combination with spectacular Mode 7 mini-games. But whether one is leaping from platform to platform on the Jawas' massive Sandcrawler or streaking toward the Death Star in a Rebel X-Wing, this is state-of-the-art entertainment.

• **Street Fighter II** (Capcom) Anyone who doesn't know about this classic side-view, one-on-one butt-kicking contest must have been spending the last few months on another planet. Learning the special moves of each fighter is the real fun here, in addition to the coin-op level graphics. An incredible 16-megs of memory went into this electrifying street fighting simulation.

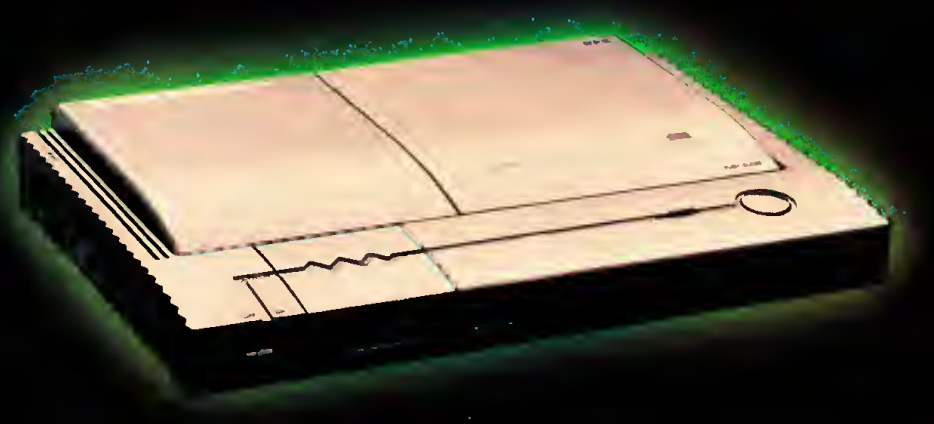
• **The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past** (Nintendo) **The Legend of Zelda** and its sequel, **Zelda II: The Adventure of Link**, were among the most popular games in the history of the NES. Combining RPG features and arcade action, they created a new genre of adventure games. This is the third entry in the series, the first created for the SNES, and it lives up to, and even surpasses, its predecessors.

• **Pilotwings** (Nintendo) One of the earliest SNES releases, this multi-event program was the first title to show off some of Mode 7's neatest technical tricks. Players skydive, fly biplanes, experiment with rocket packs, hang glide and have an overall great time at the world's wildest flight academy.

Other recommended titles include: **Axelay** (Konami), **Bart's Nightmare** (Acclaim), **Super Mario Kart** (Nintendo) and **SimCity** (Nintendo).

— Bill Kunkel

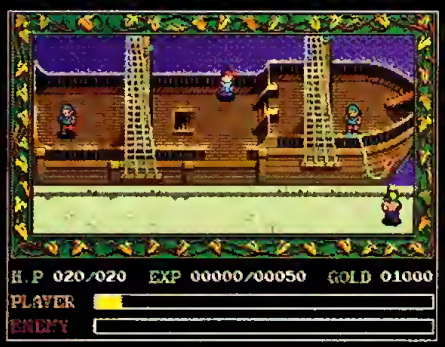
CARTRIDGES FOR...



NES

• **Super Mario 3** (Nintendo) It would be hard to do a "Best of" list without naming Nintendo's main man. It's a great game that stays enjoyable time and time again.
• **Battle Toads** (Tradewest) An action game, starring some of the most interesting characters around. Top-notch graphics and game play makes this a top title.
• **Mega Man 4** (Capcom) It was hard to pick just one out of this series, since they keep getting better and better. Who knows, #5 may unseat this one.
• **Contra** (Konami) This series has endured to the 16-Bit side, but it is still hard to top the original. Great game play keeps this one in its own league.
• **Castlevania III** (Konami) The use of multiple characters sets this game apart from its predecessors. The 16-Bit version should have been this good.

TurboGrafx-16 (and CD)



• **Ys Books I & II** CD (TTI) Really two games in one, this is simply the best for the system. It incorporates great graphics, music, and voice. *The* must-have Turbo CD game.
• **Bonk's Adventure** (TTI) This game provided Turbo with more than a solid cart; it also gave them a much needed mascot. He may not be Mario, but Bonk is a hit.
• **R-Type** (TTI) This shooter is often copied, but never duplicated. This remains one of the best looking and most challenging games on the system.
• **Gate of Thunder** SCD (TTI) To have two shooters in the top five games is amazing, but this Super CD earns the honors. It has intense action with the graphics to match; best of all, it is a pack-in with the Turbo Duo.
• **Dragon Slayer** SCD (TTI) This RPG came from the same group that developed the Ys series. Possibly the best console RPG ever, this game makes new strides in the area of game play. One to watch for.

Neo•Geo

• **Magician Lord** (SNK) This was one of the lead-off games for the system, and it shows how good the Neo•Geo can be if time is spent developing games. It's a long action adventure, and the most challenging action game on the system.
• **World Heros** (SNK) For a system known for its fighting games, it was inevitable for the game designers to come up with a Street Fighter II clone. Still, this game is good enough to stand up on its own.
• **Baseball Stars 2** (SNK) A follow-up to one of the initial Neo•Geo titles. **Baseball Stars 2** may not offer any big endorsements, but it creates a solid game.
• **Soccer Brawl** (SNK) The best soccer simulation ever, period.
• **View Point** (SNK) A shooter that shows off the power of this system, with fantastic graphics and sound.

— Marc Camron

A LOOK AT THE

You'll Have to Wait A Year, but the Super Machines are Coming!

by Arnie Katz

It's hard to complain about the longevity of the 8-Bit video game. Anyone who bought an NES the first year it was available, has had six years of exciting new games to play.

The Nintendo Entertainment System is still moderately viable today. The flow of new games has diminished, but there are still more 8-Bit carts than most people can afford to buy.

It's doubtful that 16-Bit systems will last as long. There will be powerful new video game hardware on the market well before the Genesis celebrates its fourth birthday. If the transition follows the classic pattern, that means the total lifespan of 16-Bit will be 18 months shorter than for 8-Bit.

Gamers have barely realized the glories of the 16-Bit systems, so why is the industry already developing an entire new generation of super-powered consoles?

Progress in computer technology has relentlessly accelerated since the vacuum tube monsters of the 1940s. It was only a matter of time until someone decided to apply the power and speed of 32-Bit computing to video games, which depend so heavily on graphics, sound, and the ability to move images rapidly around the screen.

Some industry thinkers admit that the move to 16-Bit may not have been the best strategy. Video game-based multimedia rubs publishers' noses in the limitations of 16-Bit. Titles on CD disc previewed by **Electronic Games** haven't been too impressive.

Video game companies love multimedia. Comparing the cost of a ROM cart to a CD disk makes this passion entirely understandable. If the public will buy multimedia video games, it will exchange the economics of the whole industry. Hardware and software companies would rather risk the change to 32-Bit technology than chance consumer rejection of disk media for video games.

32-Bit Basics

Off-the-record interviews have enabled **EG** to put together the first comprehensive overview of current 32-Bit video gaming projects. At this point it's hard to make many generalizations about the super-machines. All are expected to be equipped with slots to accept ROM cartridges as well as CD drives for multimedia video games on disks.

Manufacturers are secretive about release info. Most likely, the first unit will have a sneak preview at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show (WCES) in Las Vegas this coming January. At least one of these ultra-advanced consoles could reach the retail market as early as fall 1993.

The Systems Are Coming

Electronic Games has verified the existence of no fewer than six 32-Bit systems currently in development. Here's a recap of what is known today:

- **Sega**

  The rapid decline of Genesis sales in Japan during 1992 has led the company to intensify its efforts to get the next system ready for action. The Sega CD, which works with the Genesis, has been criticized for its slow data transfer speed, and a better drive will certainly be introduced to mate with the 32-Bit system.

- **Nintendo**

  The Big N electrified the gaming world with its August announcement that it will not market a CD drive for the SNES as it currently exists. The reason? Even with the

newly-introduced Super Fx chip, Nintendo believes 16-Bit CD games aren't good enough.

In a bold move designed to reclaim video gaming leadership in this country, Nintendo has revealed plans to produce an upgrade for the SNES. The unit, which will plug into the cartridge slot, gives the SNES the 32-Bit capabilities it will need to work with the powerful CD peripheral which will complete the 32-Bit upgrade.

A 1993 debut is feasible.

- **HudsonSoft**

Turbo Technologies, Inc., HudsonSoft's joint venture in the U.S. with NEC, was the first company ready for consumers.

Closed door demos attended by **EG editors** have stressed the unit's ability to present full-motion video.

- **Atari**

There's a new Atari project, the Jaguar (working title). This one is going all the way (unlike the abandoned 24-Bit Panther) says Atari management. It is reportedly a 64-Bit luxury system, utilizing two 32-Bit processors.

With no existing customer base to alienate, Atari can rush the Jaguar to market as quickly as its R&D department gets one ready for mass production. The company hasn't announced a timetable, but the Jaguar might be shown to the industry at the 1993 Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago and launched as a consumer product in time for Christmas 1993.

Atari's track record in the last decade hasn't inspired overwhelming retailer confidence. The Jaguar may rate as a longshot in some quarters, but the name Atari has retro chic. The software library will be the test.

- **Electronic Arts**

The code name for the software publisher's first foray into the treacherous waters of hardware manufacture was "SMSG" (for San Mateo Software Group), but sources now say the machine will be named the 3-D-O. Rumors abound. Even **EG**'s network of inside sources is spewing forth questionable data.

However, our investigative reporters have discovered that the hardware system and software is well along toward completion.

At this point, most informants agree that the 3-D-O is a high-end video game system with multimedia capability. The most frequently mentioned list price is $800. There will be lots of games, but quite a few of the titles are educational or focus on entertaining activities, like art and music.

The 3-D-O console is said to have a cable-ready interface. It is speculated that the 3-D-O may be offered two different ways: for direct sale like any other video game system, and through cable companies on a rental basis. Cable customers would be able to play disk-based multimedia games as well as download others over the wire.

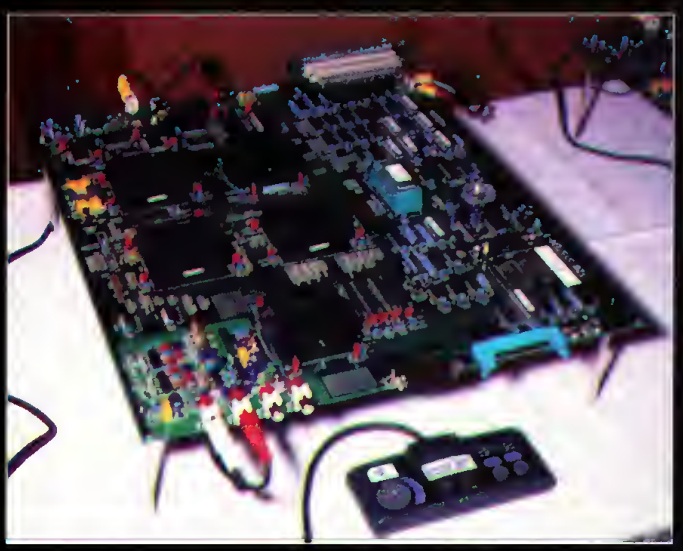
- **SNK**

The Japanese company has carved a small, but profitable niche for itself with the home version of the cartridge system it markets to coin-op arcades. Now SNK is working on a replacement for the 16/24-Bit machine.

Whether SNK would then introduce a home edition of the system, as it did with the Neo•Geo, is yet to be determined. The best guess is a spring 1995 introduction.

EG plans to stay on top of the 32-Bit wave as it develops in the next 24 months, and as more info becomes available you will be sure to find it here.

32-BIT FUTURE



with video game CDs actually in the stores. Even the beefed up CD drive incorporated into the Duo (and now available as an add-on for the TG16) can't overcome the severe hardware limitations.

HudsonSoft isn't well-known in the United States, but it is a video gaming giant in Japan. It has been working on a 32-Bit console longer than any other company, so it is presumably closer to having it

THE SEASON

Getting 16-Bit Video Games Under Control

by Ross Chamberlain

With both Nintendo and Sega shipping just one controller pad with their newer, bargain-priced 16-Bit packages, many purchasers will seek to buy additional controllers, especially for those games where two or more players may participate. Many others will want to upgrade to controllers that have nonstandard functions such as turbo or automatic firing or slow motion.

Second-party manufacturers of pads and joysticks are gearing up for an expected holiday rush. A few who have until now been making controller units only for the 8-Bit systems or computers will be introducing pads or joysticks for the SNES or Genesis or both.

For the most part, current video games are designed for pad controllers. Where exceptions are made, a special controller may be provided, as in Nintendo's **Mario Paint and Mouse**.

Several manufacturers offer full joystick-type controllers,

complete with a variety of action buttons, as upgrades for the original-equipment pads.

There are also remote target-shooting units available from the game unit manufacturers themselves. For instance, Nintendo brought out the Super NES **SuperScope 6**, a shoulder pack and rifle-like unit using infra red technology to aim at the screen.

Sega is introducing the **Menacer**, a modular target controller for the Genesis - the infra red operated Master Module, or main firing component; the Stabilizer, which snaps to it like a rifle stock, and the Binocular module which attaches like a dual scope sight. A switchable on-screen cursor called Accu-Sight works like a laser-sighting device.

Turbo Technologies, which markets the TurboGrafx-16, packs it with a the **TurboPad**, which allows three levels of turbo firing, a feature relegated to the upgrade units for the other systems. It also offers the **Turbo-Stick** joystick with an on-off switch, slow motion capability, and variable-speed turbo fire. The company also "puts an end to impatient tum-taking" with a multi-controller expansion box that lets up to five gamers play selected games at once.

To date only IMN Control plans any additions, theirs being a TG-16 version of the **Gamehandler**.

Game publisher Ascii Entertainment Software, Inc., has a top-selling line of controllers. The **asciiPad** for the SNES offers independent turbo control for all buttons, automatic turbo fire (20/sec), and slow motion control. The **Super-Advantage** is an arcade-style joystick for the SNES, the big brother of its popular Advantage stick for the 8-Bit NES. Button placement on the unit simulates the style on arcade consoles, and it has an oversize 8-way directional ball and stick, variable slow-motion control and adjustable or automatic turbo fire for all buttons (30-35/sec).

Ascii also makes the

OF THE CONTROLLER

The Super Advantage from Ascii offers advanced controller functions.

Power Clutch SG for the Genesis, an arcade-style joystick with features similar to the Super-Advantage.

Capcom U.S.A. introduced its **Fighter Power Stick** this summer. It has 8-way joystick control, six action buttons and three rapid-fire turbo buttons. Though originally specifically designed for **Street Fighter II** on the SNES, it's said to enhance play on any SNES-based video game. In an unusual configuration, the unit is also compatible with the NES.

Beeshu, Inc. added extra long cords on its pad for the SNES,the **Angler**, and a pad and joystick for the Genesis. The **Angler** sports color coordinated turbo and auto fire settings, plus a switch for slow or super slow motion. The Genesis pad, called **Striker**, has three independent rapid-fire controls. **Gizmo**, the joystick, is set up for either right or left hand play, with variable speed auto-fire controls, turbo buttons and adjustable slow motion. The Genesis units also include stereo headphone jacks.

A Dan America introduced two current units that have three-way turbo control and slow motion: the **Power Pad Plus** for Genesis and **Super Power Pad** for the SNES. The **Gemini**, (for PC compatibles) can also be used with the Genesis with a plug adapter.

Happ Controls, Inc., a manufacturer of joystick controls for coin-ops, makes a line of control pads for both the Genesis and SNES under the **Competition Pro** label. The **CP series II Pad** for the Genesis features sunken fire buttons, while the **CP Super 16 Pad** for the SNES specifies autofire to 24 shots per second on all six buttons.

A unique, one-hand design for controllers is the **Gamehandler** series by IMN Control. Designated versions are available for systems across the main video game platforms: The **Gamehandler-GS** for the Genesis and the **Gamehandler-NSX** for the SNES; there is also a 16-Bit **Super Adapter** that attaches to the original NES version to provide the same features available with the NSX unit. In addition to offering slow motion, the **Gamehandlers** provide several unusual embellishments, such as running the game backwards, or the ability to "hyperwarp" around the screen.

STD Entertainment (USA), Inc., has game controllers for many platforms. In addition to the **SG Pad**, a near match for the original pad, units for the Sega Genesis include **SG Fighter, SG Pro Advanced, SG Pedal, SG Megastar** and **SG Programmable**. For the SNES are the **Ni-5, SN Pad** and **SN Programmable.** All incorporate a number of special features to enhance game playing; of particular note, the programmable units record into special "function key" buttons up to four sequences of movements and button actions, such as are required in some games to achieve special effects, power-ups or easter-egg codes.

Programmed functions are also available in a pad-style controller from Triton Toys, Inc., San Jose, CA. The **Triton Game Master** can customize and automate combinations of moves, with acceleration and repetition, including an auto-pilot feature that replays combinations while the gamer is playing regular moves.

Regardless of the innovations in the nature of what is being controlled - the added buttons and switches for turbo fire, slow motion and coding tricks - all of these manufacturers' units rely on the same basic mechanical technology: Some joysticks for other computer systems have used analog controls, but video game joysticks have always used rocker switches in the base, and the directional pads on current controllers are essentially flattened joysticks. The Numb Thumb syndrome amongst avid video gamers is the result of hours of pushing and pressing on such controllers.

Ascii will also offer their popular ascii Pad for the Sega Genesis.

To beat the sore-thumb blues, check out Triax Controls, Inc., with **Turbo Touch 360** pad-style controllers in configurations for the Genesis, SNES and NES. Triax has applied the touch capacitance technology used for years in elevator buttons to provide highly responsive directional control without the trauma caused by constant thumb-flexing.

There will be no lack of selection this holiday season for those avid video gamers who seek great control over their toughest game carts.

ALAS, POOR 8-BIT...

While critics are claiming death for this questionably obsolete machine, others are saying wait a little longer. Certainly there are those not yet ready to give up on the old 8-Bit standard.

The Nintendo has been nothing less than a phenomenon. The machine itself was technologically inferior to its main competitor, the Sega Master System, but through diligent marketing and support, managed to remain number one.

Then, when Sega went forward and started marketing their 16-Bit machine (the Genesis), Nintendo was content to wait another full year and ride on the success of the 8-Bit wonder.

Now that the 16-Bit wars are in full swing, 8-Bit Nintendos are inexpensive new, and even cheaper used. Combine this with new and used software starting at a paltry $5.00, and you have a machine for those who were either unable or unwilling to spend premium prices for this equipment new.

There are older games for the Nintendo that are undeniably good, and more are on the way. Games like **Super Mario 3**, **Tecmo Bowl**, **Final Fantasy**, **Castlevania III**, and **Contra** are now considered classics and are often duplicated.

Batman Returns is one of the hot new releases for the 8-Bit Nintendo.

Companies like Capcom and Konami, recognize the user base still out there, and new games like **Batman Returns** (Konami), **Spider Man vs the Sinister Six** (LJN),**Dragon Warrior 4** (Enix), and **Mega Man 5** (Capcom) show the commitment of these companies.

There are, of course, some exceptions. Square Soft cancelled their announced **Final Fantasy II** and **Final Fantasy III** for the 8-Bit Nintendo, and instead opted to release the Japanese **Final Fantasy IV** in this country as **Final Fantasy II**.

Still, most companies are still supporting the 8-Bit Nintendo, and will continue to do so until the public abandons the unit.

Some may say that once a system has reached the bargain basement, it should be discontinued and support for said system should be abandoned. What is being forgotten are all of the people who shop in that basement. Two years from now, when the world is oohing and aahing over the newest 32-Bit CD based systems, there will still be those who enjoy playing with their 8-Bit NES and the 500+ games released for it, and there is nothing wrong with that.

— Marc Camron

Is the 8-Bit End Near?

It was the 8-Bit Nintendo, and the game **Super Mario Brothers**, that revitalized the home video game industry. To date, thirty million of these units have been sold in the United States, and even though Nintendo's development has switched to their 16-Bit Super Nintendo, they have promised continued support of their 8-Bit machine.

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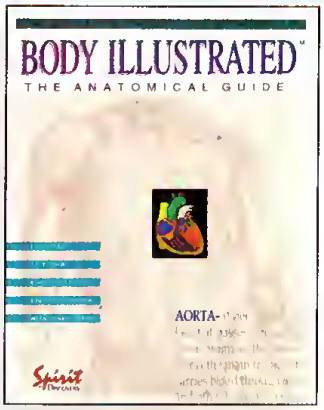

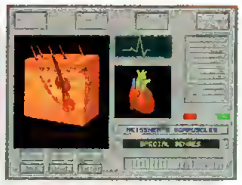

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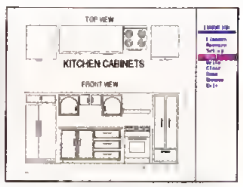

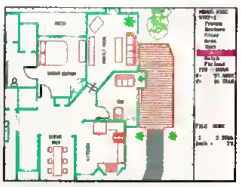

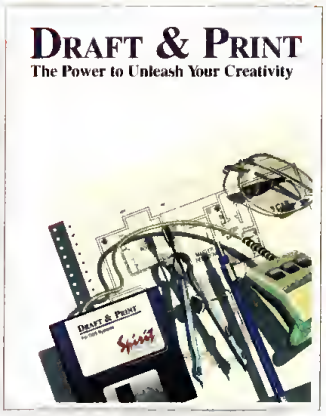

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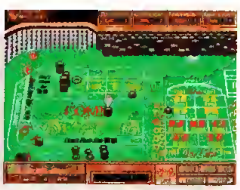

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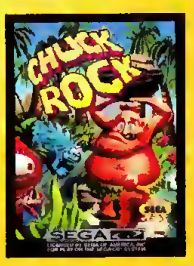

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Inside The Incredible Mind of Jeff Tunnell

by Russ Ceccola

Jeff Tunnell is one of the software industry veterans who earned his stripes in the early '80's, a time when Commodore 64's and Apple II's were all the rage and the word Nintendo meant nothing to kids weaned on the Atari 2600 and Mattel's Intellivision. He has produced over 20 products since he co-founded Dynamix in 1984 with programmer/designer Damon Slye. On December 1, 1991, Tunnell branched off from Dynamix to start Jeff Tunnell Productions,

Inc. (JTP), to supply products to parent company Sierra On-Line, Inc. for publication under their own brand name, and under the Dynamix logo.

Tunnell's expertise and production skills culminated in JTP's initial software products: the Screen Antics! series' first entry, **Johnny Castaway**; **The Incredible Machine;** and **Quarky & Quaysoo's Turbo Science**. In a recent exclusive **EG** interview, Tunnell talked about the games and his group's future goals.

Tunnell and Slye started Dynamix with a fresh, unusual and highly successful shoot-em-up/strategy game, **Stellar 7**. It was a variation on the genre **Battlezone** started in the arcades, but with enough variety and replay value to make it notable. It deserves its place of prominence, and was one of the first titles Sierra transferred to CD-ROM, along with **Mixed-Up Mother Goose**, **King's Quest V** and **Jones in the Fast Lane**.

Dynamix started commercially with **Stellar 7**, but Tunnell revealed an ironic twist that brings his story full circle. In the early days of Dynamix, Tunnell, Slye and company produced products for Electronic Arts, including **Skyfox, Skyfox II, Arcticfox, Caveman Ughlympics** and **Project: Firestart**, an overlooked gem that deserves a revisit on today's computers. Tunnell explains how "an early incarnation of **The Incredible**

Stellar 7 was the first game to come from the Dynamix company.

Machine was why Damon and I started Dynamix. We did a working version of it on the C64 and that's why Electronic Arts signed us." This version never surfaced, but the current IBM release of the game shows off

Dynamix's co-founders' first creation on 256-color VGA screens.

From Electronic Arts, Dynamix and Tunnell worked on some titles for Activision (then Mediagenic) and the first of the "modern" Dynamix games, **David Wolf: Secret Agent** and **A-10 Tank Killer**. These games were among the first to use video-captured characters on the PC and impressed Ken Williams at Sierra enough to buy Dynamix. The support given by Sierra led to such enormous hits as **Red Baron** and **Aces of the Pacific**, along with the remake of **Stellar 7, Rise of the Dragon, Willy Beamish** and Tunnell's major product, **Heart of China.**

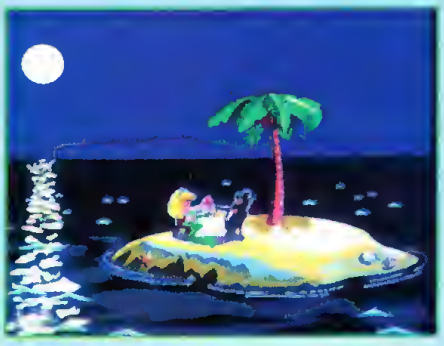
Tunnell escaped the major productions and expectations the Dynamix brand name brings by the formation of JTP. The focus at JTP is on creativity and control over the finished product. Tunnell described his new role as a chance to "work the entire product to make sure it gets done, gets tested and gets the exposure. I used to be an independent producer at Dynamix; now I have a whole production team."

The most unusual of the current JTP releases is **Johnny Castaway,** hopefully the first of a series of Screen Antics! windows, screen saver products that tell a story. **Johnny Castaway** is a big risk for JTP, but once users see Johnny's skits on a desert island a few times, they are bound to be hooked.

Tunnell shrugs off the possibility of a lukewarm response to **Johnny Castaway** because all his test subjects enjoy it. JTP plans to slip Johnny into bundled packages and other places that could show off the program. "People spend hours each day using their computer and its GUI [graphic user interface]. This program is just like decorating the office. People want to personalize their workspace," Tunnell defended. **Johnny Castaway** is sure to inspire imitators, but the idea will always be the invention of Tunnell and his team. Watching Johnny is addictive and certainly brightens a day spent on a computer. According to Tunnell, "it's more fun than flying toasters!"

JTP's first entertainment product, **The Incredible Machine**, is sure to succeed as a puzzle, level-based game, but it also boasts a free-form creativity mode. In **Machine**, players assemble various parts into a hodge-podge, Rube Goldberg assembly to solve a problem, like guiding a ball through a hoop or letting a cat out of a cage. The program uses realistic physics to activate the brain-teasing machines in each level, and the intricate puzzles test the overall creativity of the player.

When all of the 100 levels are solved, the free-form mode provides an unlimited supply of the 50 parts, plus controls to adjust gravity and wind. "A kid could learn a ton of stuff from this product, but we didn't want to position this as an educational program. The emphasis is on fun. A lot of people claim that their product



Johnny Castaway is the first of a series of animated screen savers.

is a software toy, but I feel **The Incredible Machine** is the first *real* software toy," Tunnell said. **Quarky & Quaysoo's Turbo Science** is perhaps the most interesting of JTP's initial rollout. This edutainment product teaches teenagers (and probably lots of parents, too) about physical science through a race in which players earn money by answering questions correctly. Winnings translate to better vehicles to race against the computer-controlled team to the finish line. It teaches children about science in a fun environment with colorful graphics and sound effects, and offers instant rewards for correct answers while encouraging retention and quick recall of knowledge.

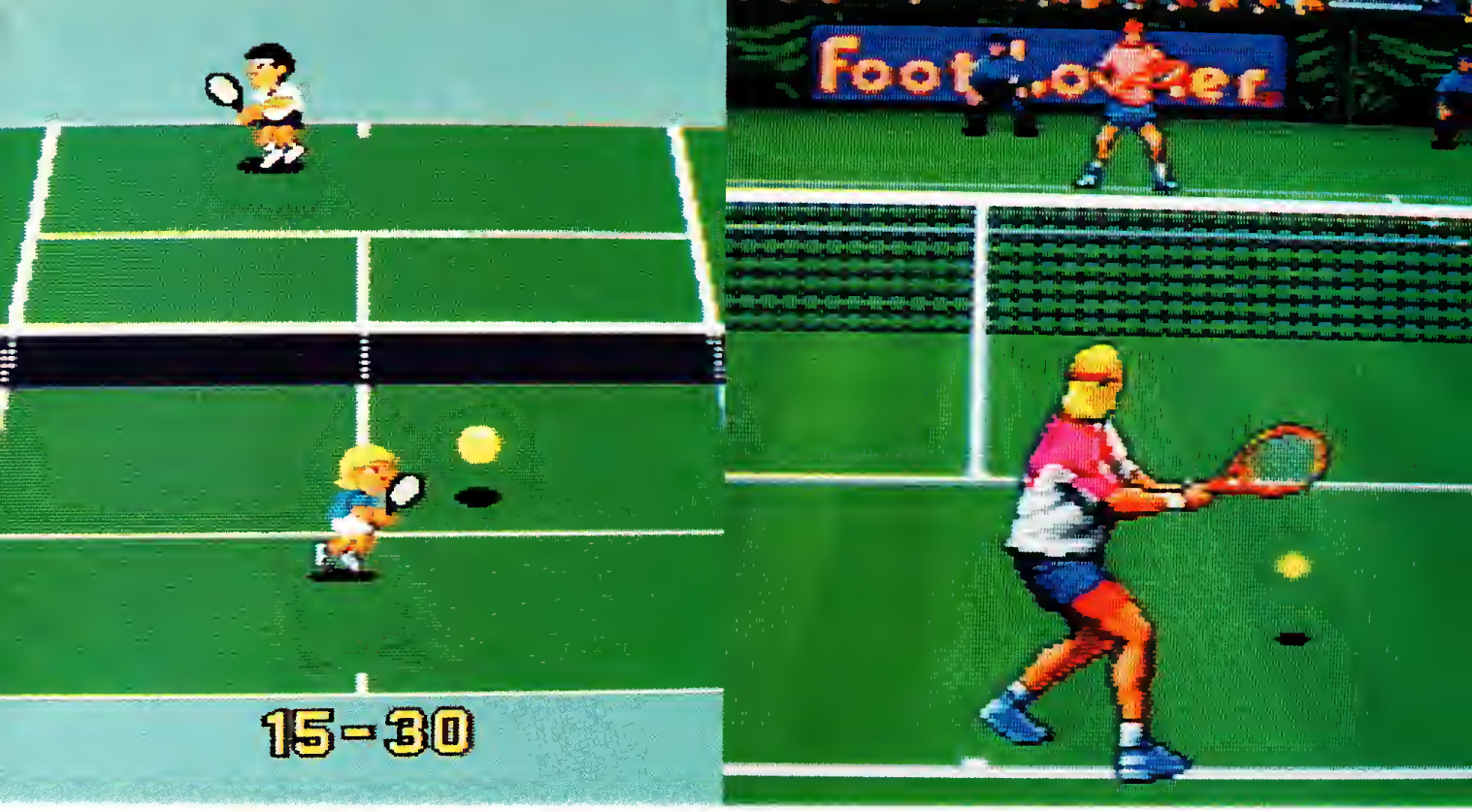
As a father of four, Tunnell's commitment to education is understandable. He used his own children to test **Turbo Science**, as well as parents, other children and educators. The result is a wonderful blend of fun and learning that doesn't intimidate the users. Tunnell's goal was to "go after subjects that people weren't doing in the aftershock of the success of the **Carmen Sandiego** products. Math and science are subjects that American kids fall short internationally. The goal of **Turbo Science** is to make a boring subject (and one of which teachers are absolutely afraid) compelling and fun for kids. This is like *Sesame Street* for an older audience." **Turbo Science** will ignite an ember of curiosity in children into a true understanding of physical science. It also makes a perfect companion to a basic science course and is far more interesting than any textbook.

JTP's product line reflects the attitudes and creativity of its producer and is a world away from the Dynamix games of the past. Tunnell promises that "everything I do will be pretty off-the-wall and chance-taking, yet still keep the budget small. The problem is that you take products like that to the sales force, and they don't know how to present them." Anyone who sees **The Incredible Machine**, **Johnny Castaway** or **Turbo Science** will easily recognize their value and entertainment, so the real challenge is to give the products the public visibility needed.

In the future, Tunnell sees "interactive storybooks as a new, exciting genre. Brøderbund created a format that may be bigger than themselves that everyone will be utilizing.

Success depends on the content of the books and a reasonable price. As a parent, I wouldn't want to pay more for a multimedia storybook than I might for a video." Tunnell also speculated about the future of his own product line. The **Turbo Science** line will take a stab at biological, health, natural/earth and space sciences with the same cast of characters. He's even more excited about further **Incredible Machine**-type products: "I see chemistry and electronics labs going the educational route; in entertainment, lots of parts to put together into cars, etc."

Tunnell expects that JTP "will stay small, with maybe three or four titles a year. We want to stay creative, have fun and not get stressed out." One walk around the JTP premises confirms this approach. The toys, geometric puzzles, cartoon books and paintings strewn throughout the office and the relaxed surroundings foster creativity that will lead to more hits in the future. Even the first thing you see when you enter the offices and when you leave personifies JTP's design approach and product value - one of those goofy, pop culture ant farms that every kid in America had, but threw away because their ants died. JTP's ant farm still has ants running around in it.



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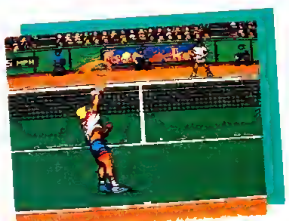

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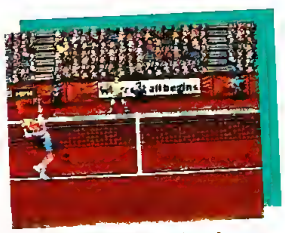

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The Games of Jeff Tunnell Productions

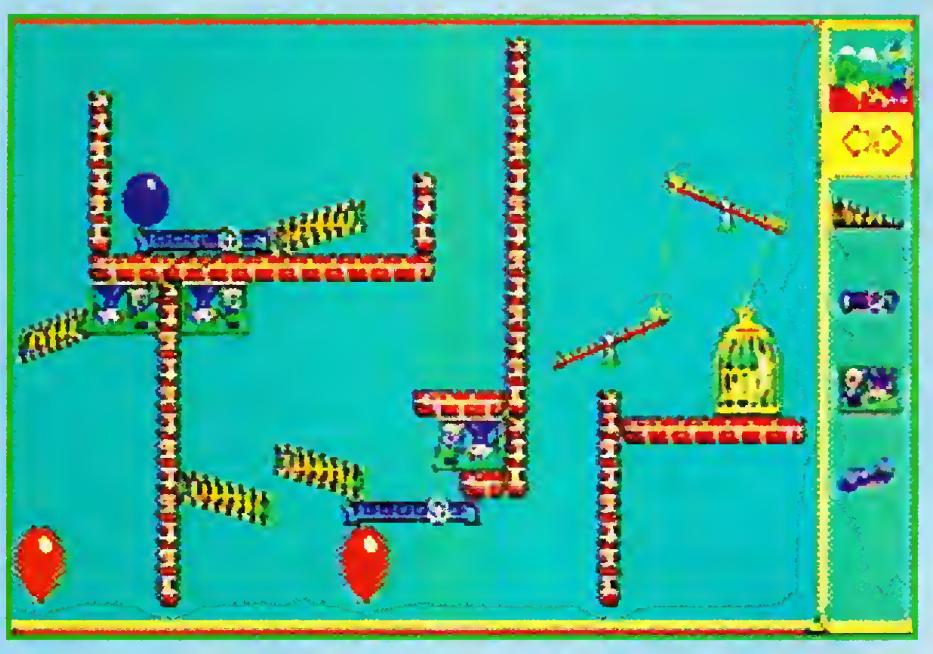
Johnny Castaway

Johnny Castaway is an unlucky soul who somehow made it onto a small, deserted island that he can completely explore in less than 10 seconds. **Castaway** is the first MicroSoft Windows 3.1 screen saver program that tells a story whenever the keyboard goes untouched for a user-definable amount of time. **Johnny Castaway** contains almost as much animation and graphics as a regular product. This translates to many weeks worth of new scenes. **Johnny Castaway** intelligently recognizes major holidays and contains plenty of humorous scenes for the Windows user who wants some fun in his work environment.

Typical scenes show Johnny as he fishes, bathes, bangs coconuts out of the lone palm tree on the island and plays chicken with the circling shark. Later in the story, Johnny finds and falls in love with a mermaid and makes attempts to leave the island. **Johnny Castaway** is pure fun. Both heavy and casual Windows users are bound to get the most out of the product, especially at its low $34.95 price.

The Incredible Machine

The Incredible Machine is as close as players can get to Rube Goldberg devices (ordinary objects strung together in a complicated, but logical path to perform a simple task) without actually building one out of household items. The game has a high-resolution interface to set up each machine, 100 puzzles, a free-form mode for experimentation with the game's machine parts and approximately 50 parts that obey the laws of physics like their real-world counterparts. Balloons rise, balls fall and other objects do what they should when the machine is in motion. The object of each level varies, but generally requires use of the parts supplied to make a machine that performs the level's task. For example, the first level's goal is to put a basketball into a hoop. A series of pulleys and hamster wheels (powered by furry rodents) help to unseat the ball and guide it to the hoop.



Computers meet Rube Goldberg inspired devices in The Incredible Machine.

Free-form is even more exciting than the puzzles. In this mode, players have access to all the parts and can connect them for the pure fun of it. Some of the parts are balloons, pulleys, conveyor belts, ramps, teeter-totters and a monkey on a bicycle with a banana on a string. Erector sets and Lego bricks were never this much fun!

Quarky & Quaysoo's Turbo Science

Turbo Science challenges players to win a race against a computer-controlled team by answering questions about physical science topics like flight, magnetism, electricity and states of matter. Each of the more than 20 topics represents a unique location on an overall map of the race site. Players choose Quarky (male) or Quaysoo (female) as their team member and provide the brain to their cute alien counterpart's brawn. Each successful answer on the colorful topic screens earns money; wrong answers deduct from the total. It takes more money to buy faster means of transportation, and players not only must answer questions correctly, but also quicker than the opponent.

Each of the topic screens has an appropriate scene that shows examples of that type of science in action. Most questions ask players to select a particular highlighted object that satisfies some condition. Others require players to make measurements with instruments from the tool box. The electricity screen might have a voltmeter as a tool, whereas the states of matter screen has a beaker for measuring liquid. Correct answers result in Quarky or Quaysoo performing crazy antics on the screen, in wonderful animated displays.

The manual/research guide is an attractive 150-page book that uses colorful cartoons and graphics to teach the game's topics. The game refers the players to specific pages if they choose the help option.

Turbo Science presents science facts and knowledge in a fun and attractive manner that children can't resist. Mastery of the game goes hand in hand with a strong understanding of basic physical science and prepares the player for more advanced and detailed subjects later in school.

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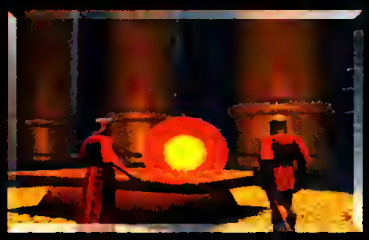

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WAR IN THE

FLATTOPS AND FRIGATES: W.W. II PACIFIC

by Ed Dille

W.W. II saw the apex of naval warfare; it is extremely doubtful that nations of the world will wield fleets of that magnitude again. Some fifty years later, the software industry has indirectly honored the brave men who fought these battles in a number of new titles surrounding events in the Pacific. At the time of this writing, some of these games were not fully completed.

Naval engagements may easily be divided into two categories: carrier vs. carrier battles, where air power was paramount, and pure surface engagements resolved by gunnery and torpedoes. Players who wish to experience carrier combat from the perspective of aviators may turn to either **Battlehawk 1942** or **Aces of the Pacific**. Both programs offer solid aircraft modeling, and high replay value. Although each product merits further discussion in a separate forum, the perspective herein will remain that of the surface warrior, regardless of the platform he happens to be riding.

Focusing on carrier duels from the viewpoint of a task force commander, two new arrivals are actually revisions of programs originally designed for the 8-Bit machines. The first of these, **Carrier Strike**, is a complete rework of SSI's **Carrier Force** (both by Gary Grigsby, see accompanying interview). The second, SSG's **Carriers at War**, retains its original title for the IBM re-release, with added improvements.

Carrier Strike covers the Pacific theatre from 1942-44 with historical scenarios for each of the major engagements: Coral Sea, Midway, Eastern Solomons, Santa Cruz and the Marianas Turkey Shoot. Additionally, there is a hypothetical engagement that places four refitted Japanese carriers against six U.S. carriers in support of an invasion of the Japanese stronghold on Rabul. The historical engagements may be randomized for greater replay value and, more significantly, the player may select a campaign option. This feature allows the player to fight a battle every month (provided the enemy can field sufficient opposition) and obtain victory points for sea control as well as damage. Ships sunk or badly damaged in one battle are unavailable for the next.

PACIFIC

NAVAL COMBAT ON THE SMALL SCREEN

A **Carrier Strike** update (1.1) is available for download from the Genie network. The revision significantly reduces the effectiveness of second and third strikes on a given day (to more accurately reflect pilot fatigue levels) and also provides a number of extended scenarios. The best addition is a **Campaign 1947** game that allows for considerable equipment improvements (including night capable aircraft) for both sides prior to the war's start.

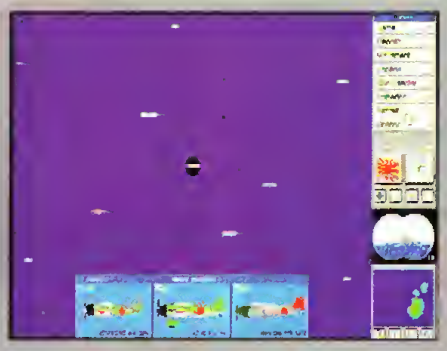
Carriers at War keeps pilot ranking based on experience and training.

Carrier Strike's greatest strength is that it simplifies some very complicated evolutions, such as managing a flight deck, to make them manageable by casual wargamers. The manner in which it accomplishes these simplifications, however, may prove unacceptable to grognards and historical purists. As an example, aircraft are not required to fly anti-submarine patrol (ASP), a duty which consumed fully 30 percent of an air wing's strength. Additionally, CAP aircraft remain aloft all day, unless engaged, precluding the need for the carrier to maneuver into the wind every hour and a half for flight ops. CAP aircraft are also much less effective than their historical performance for either side. Finally, there is the fact that the AI routines for CAP management are the same for both sides, which negates the advantages provided by U.S. radar detecting incoming Japanese strikes well in advance of their arrival.

SSG's **Carriers at War** is glossier than **Carrier Strike**, offering animations of individual attacks, but it essentially covers the same ground with a different emphasis. Victory point calculations are more closely tied to destruction of enemy shipping and aircraft (the latter were practically insignificant in **Carrier Strike**, despite the importance of experienced pilots within the squadron), rather than to accomplishing a mission, such as supporting an invasion fleet. On the positive side, **Carriers at War** ranks individual pilots within each squadron based on their experience and level of training and applies these modifiers to each attack. Another addition is the ability to play the Pearl Harbor scenario but, although a scenario editor is planned, there is not currently an option for campaign play (which is sorely missed). Players are even further restricted from the nuts and bolts of flight ops, relegating themselves to assigning a target for a strike and watching as the wing prepares and executes the mission.

Individual aircraft performance seems more accurate than **Carrier Strike**; CAP aircraft cycle through the flight deck throughout the day, and the fog of war is preserved in damage assessment. This latter conclusion is most significant in that, historically, pilots returning to their carriers claimed considerably more success than they actually enjoyed. This reality can be attributed to a number of factors other than being braggarts, all of which fall outside this discussion. The important point is that the player will not obtain a "true" picture of strike effectiveness until the scenario is over.

Fleet Commander, an upcoming release from RAW Entertainment, promises to strike an appropriate balance between purism and practicality, allowing players to select the functions that they desire to control personally and allowing the computer to manage the remainder. **Fleet Commander** is currently under design by Alan Zimm (a career naval officer) as a follow to the cult hit, **Action Stations**. The latter focuses exclusively on surface engagements, eschewing flattops and submarines, but it remains the most accurate ballistic and damage control model on the market. Each shell hit induces accurate penetration based on angle of flight, armor thickness at the precise point of impact, and precipitates damage that is correct for the actual

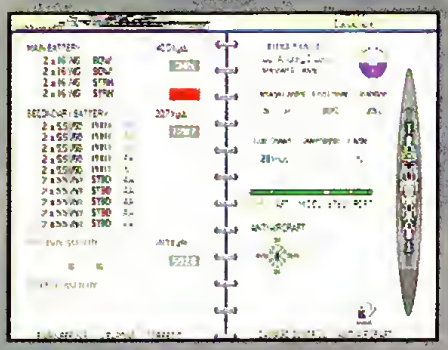


Fleet Commaner is the foilow up to the cult hit Action Stations.

WAR IN THE PACIFIC

FLATTOPS AND FRIGATES: W.W. II PACIFIC NAVAL COMBAT ON THE SMALL SCREEN

historic function of the damaged area. Mr. Zimm promises **Fleet Commander** will extend the model to new horizons. All ships and aircraft of the time are included; some details have



Recent releases show the increase of interest in W.W. II simulations.

been added that were previously unavailable through the Naval archives. Players can also select Fleet Commander mode. In this capacity, the player can only directly control his flagship and is restricted to communicating with his other forces via message traffic.

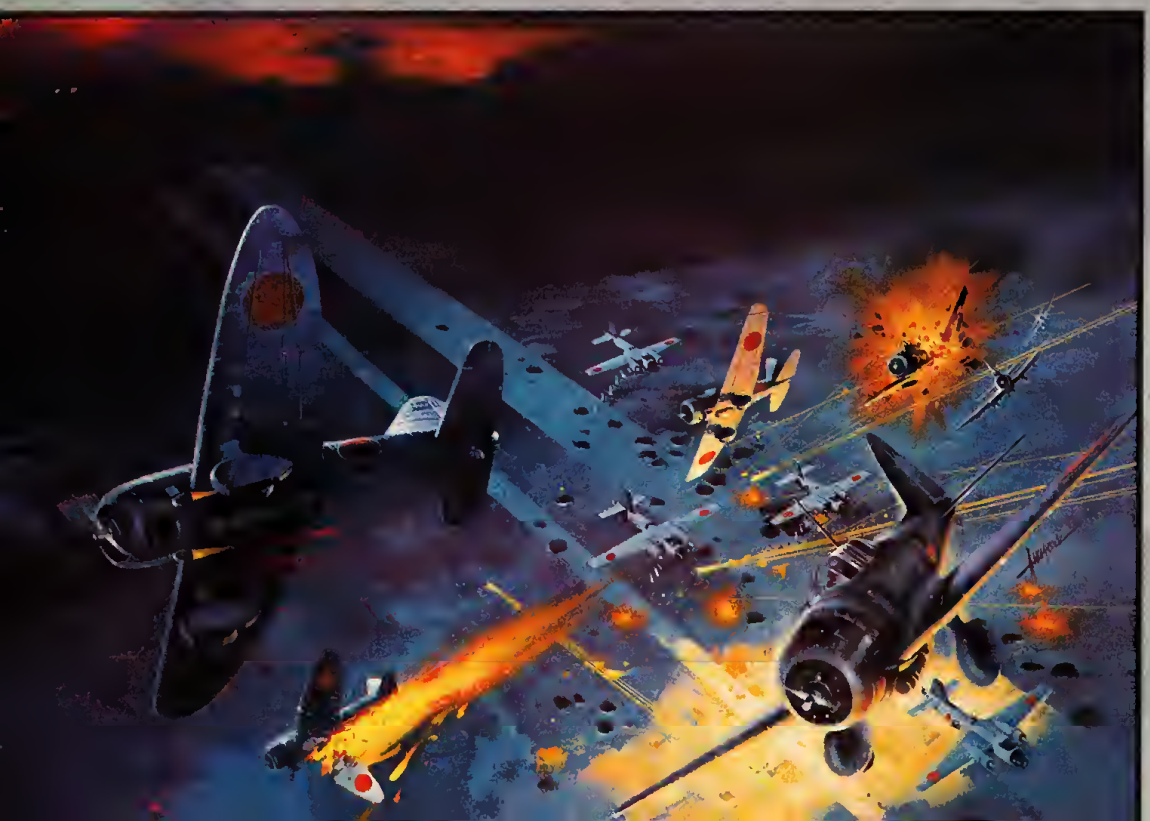
A similar control method is available to players of Microprose's **Task Force 1942**, a product unique in that it is a simulation, not unlike **M-1 Tank Platoon**. The focus of the game is on night surface actions in an area of the Eastern Solomons that became infamously known as iron bottom sound. All combatants are destroyers, cruisers or battleships and players can command a single ship, a division of similar ships, or an entire Task Force. The latter two options are map-based, but individual ship actions are viewed from the bridge, with all the glory and horror of close night actions. It is possible to select individual engagements or control the entire Guadalcanal campaign, popping down for important battles as desired. This is the first of a promised series of W.W. II simulations, with the next product scheduled to involve carrier warfare.

Two other major releases could not be viewed in sufficient detail to permit detailed comment. The first, **War in the Pacific,** by SSI, is discussed briefly in the accompanying interview. The second, **Victory at Sea**, is coming from the acknowledged naval professionals at Three-Sixty. **Victory at Sea**, built on an interface similar to **Harpoon**, will permit strategic and tactical levels of play, and promises to incorporate ground forces as well.

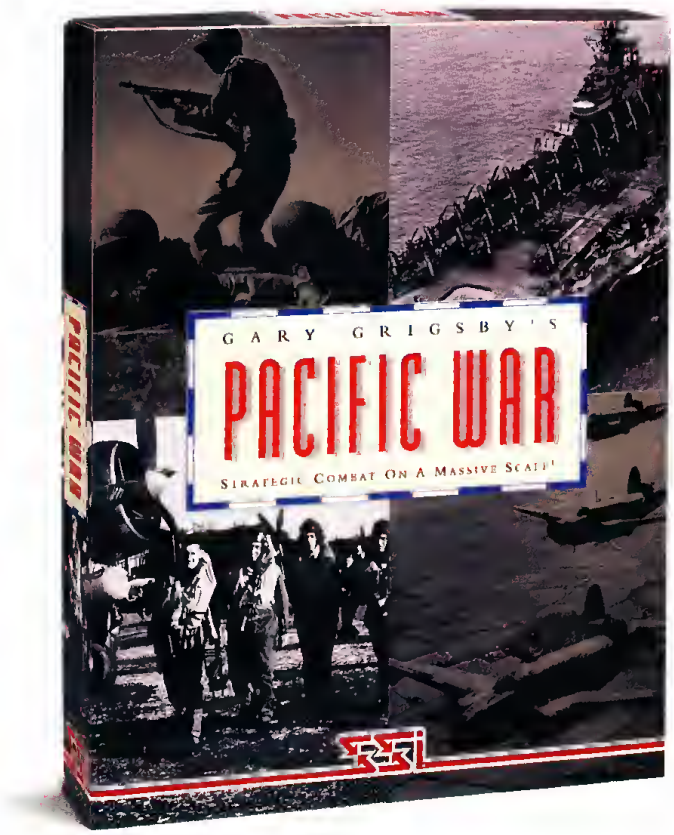
Task Force 1942 focuses on the area known as "Iron sound bottom".

Players who can live with antiquated or completely absent graphics can obtain other naval Pacific titles from General Quarters Software and Simulations Canada, both mail order concerns.

Just as naval engagements are uncertain affairs until the passage of time occurs, which of these titles will emerge the victor in the market place remains to be seen. Each offers design philosophies as varied as the construction of different classes of ships. Regardless, every aspiring Captain is certain to find a seaworthy vessel moored somewhere in this harbor.



LAND! AIR! SEA!



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WAR IN THE PACIFIC

FLATTOPS AND FRIGATES: W.W. II PACIFIC NAVAL COMBAT ON THE SMALL SCREEN

A WORD WITH GARY GRIGSBY

Electronic Games: Where did you develop your initial interest in wargaming and how did you progress to the level you are at today?
Gary Grigsby: I don't know where I picked it up exactly, but it was probably when I saw a game called **Panzer Blitz** in 1971. My evolution as a programmer has been gradual, mostly because it has all been self-taught. I started with a TRS-80 and therefore had a head start on the Apple. One year later, I had completed the code for my Guadalcanal game, which SSI published shortly thereafter. Ever since, it's just been a case of refining my ability to keep pace with better hardware.
EG: Do you still have time to play other people's designs and, if so, do you have a favorite?
GG: Some others, **Silent Service II, F-119 Stealth Fighter** and **Harpoon,** are the ones I play mostly. I try to find things as little like my own as possible.

War in the Pacific is Gary Grigsby's latest strategic war simulation.

EG: What was the impetus behind **Carrier Strike**?
GG: It was a topic I first did in 1983 with **Carrier Force**, which was the fourth game that I published. I liked the subject matter and, given the evolution in computer capability and my programming skills, I wanted to refine it.
EG: Given that the operating system is an extension of your "Front" series of games, what design considerations posed the most problems for you?
GG: Because it was an interface for operational level land combat, I had to create a flight deck display. Most of the rest of it fit fairly well. Actually, the original **Carrier Strike** was an offshoot of my **War in the Pacific** game, which was being designed first. I developed **Carrier Strike** in a week during a dead period. The flight deck display came up in a bull session at SSI. I don't take credit for the original idea, but it did execute surprisingly well.
EG: What can you tell us about your scheduled November release, **War in the Pacific**?
GG: It will cover from Pearl Harbor to the assault on the Japanese mainland in weekly turns. The player will form Task Forces and assign destinations, either friendly or enemy bases. Units entering enemy zones of control will be subject to air strikes and reaction by enemy surface forces. Leader ratings will have an influence on combat as well. Land units will be rated for experience, but the game will use point-to-point movement, similar to **Risk**, vice the traditional hex grid. There will be lots of command and logistical considerations in the game which will keep things under control.

EG: Getting back to **Carrier Strike**, could you go into a little detail on the AI behind the game?
GG: AI for carrier warfare is not that hard to do; it's fairly straightforward. First, after detection of enemy forces, the carrier groups will try and close with the enemy to strike range and then maintain that range until things go bad. Second, it is important that the carrier ready the right aircraft for the situation. Morning searches and carrier air patrols launch automatically. I've designed a lot of AI's that do cheat in small ways but this one doesn't. As to Japanese versus American, aside from range and equipment differences, both sides will utilize CAP the same and compose similar strike formations, making the differences minute.
EG: What follow-up projects to **War In the Pacific** can you discuss?
GG: I know that it will be a European theater W.W. II land tactical game similar in scope to **Panzer Strike**, but I am waiting on a new graphics system from SSI. It should allow intense terrain types, increased map graphics and other improvements.

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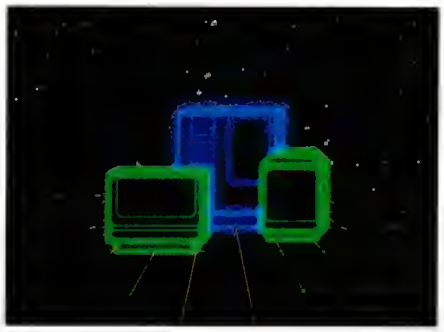


VIDEO GAME GALLERY

Wing Commander

Mindscape
SNES
1 Player

When Origin first showed Chris Roberts' superb **Wing Commander** at a CES show in 1990, it represented the absolute pinnacle of PC state of the art; it was a full notch above any game of its type. Yet such is the fickleness of high technology that only two years later, it seems almost ordinary and, in some places, somewhat quaint.

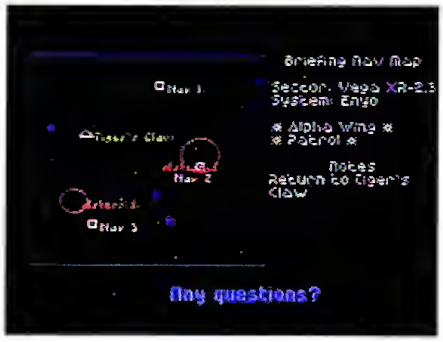
The SNES conversion of Wing Commander, a magnificent counterfeit of a computer game, has been handled with consummate skill. But computer games with a strong action component have a history of failure in the video game field. After all, fast action graphics are what video game systems were designed to produce. What seems amazing on a home computer, therefore, often fails to dazzle when transferred to a video game.

For all these reasons, **Wing Commander**, despite its near-perfect reproduction of the original, is unlikely to blow away the average SNES owner. In the wake of a contest such as **Super Star Wars**, this program loses some of its sparkle. Nonetheless, it is a good game, even if it no longer carries the cache' its computer predecessor did.

Although **Wing Commander** centers around space combat, there is quite a bit of plot around the edges. The game begins with the player/character in the ready room of a base ship where he can converse with pilots and other personnel by clicking on them. Each has some interesting information and/or strategy tips to contribute. The ready room also contains access to the barracks and a combat simulator, on which practice missions are flown. The player soon learns that they are at war with a race of cat-like aliens known as the Kilrathi.

Moving to the barracks initiates a briefing, which details the current status of the Kilrathi conflict and the first mission. This entire process is handled through the use of cinematic cut scenes and text subtitles. The memorable side view of the pilots as they scramble toward the fighter bays is reproduced perfectly from the original.

Once the player's ship is launched, the game is entirely first person, with the gamer's thickly-gloved fist seen gripping a large control stick, its movement mirroring the player's commands. The on-screen ego is flight leader for a wing of fighters, which may prove troublesome for video gamers used to blasting every object that rolls into view. Should the player be so reckless as to fire on one of their own ships, a stern text warning is immediately transmitted from the pilot of the ship under attack. The player is able to fire two different types of weapons and can toggle to a map screen at any time. In addition, a radar screen tracks all spacecraft, indicating the Kilrathi with a glowing, red dot.



During the mission sequence, there is a map to aid in planning strategy.

The graphics remain impressive, even if they aren't the pinnacle of SNES technology. The only visual problem is one shared by the original PC version: when objects, such as the Kilrathi ships, come too close, they immediately break down into fat pixels, giving everything a saw-toothed edge. The music has an appropriately epic quality, with the sound effects equally good.

It isn't anyone's fault that the onward tide of high tech has left **Wing Comman-**

der covered with a bit of dust. It's still a very strong title and the latest representative of a genre that has been beloved by gamers since the days of **Star Raiders**.

So let's go kick some Kilrathi tail, eh?

– Bill Kunkel

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	89%
Sound	80%
Playability	89%
OVERALL	85%

Faceball 2000

Bullet-Proof Software
SNES
Xanth Software F/X, Inc.
1-2 Players

This first-person maze shoot'em-up provides the opportunity to blast those ubiquitous yellow happy-face critters, called Smiloids. Regrettably, the gamer's status is also represented by happy faces, and in a two-player game, each has 16 possible face images to present to the other. In other words, if you want to beat 'em, you have to join 'em.

One or two players compete against the Smiloids in either the Arena or the CyberZone. In the Arena, a crowded stadium is visible as a backdrop to the walls of a single, selectable maze. This scenario pits either one player or a team against up to six Smiloids, or a pair of players against each other. In two-player mode, a split-screen format is used.

In the CyberZone's 41 levels, the skylines of world cities, such as Seattle, Toronto and Amsterdam, or other appropriate backdrops such as Mars Zone, Nebula or Antarctica, appear beyond the maze walls. Here players either act individually or as a team against the Smiloids, whose numbers and degree of resistance increase along with the complexity of the mazes.

Faceball 2000 offers first person mazes against many backdrops.

Either way, players tag opponents by shooting big, suspiciously yellow, spheres at them. These shots take time to travel, and because of the first-person perspective, it is difficult to judge adequate lead time just as in overhead viewpoint games. Moreover, an opponent may be approaching from behind and tag the player unexpectedly. One of the first things the player has to master is to control turning and moving with the directional pad. This must be done in order to keep a good lookout in all directions and still be prepared to track and shoot at a target once seen.

The next thing to learn is how to keep cool whenever (as frequently occurs) one's opponent cheerfully remarks, "Have a nice day!"

Getting wasted wouldn't be so bad if they weren't so nice about it.

In the Arena, opponents are not destroyed when hit; the first to get ten tags (player, team or computer opponent) wins. In the Cyberzone, the Smiloids disappear or blow up when shot, though some take more shots to complete the job than others. Also, certain ones carry pods, which have Special-Ups and Power-Ups that are needed in subsequent levels.

The simple shooting format turns complex with the variety of maze formats and different types of Smiloids, together with the Special-Ups (which provide temporary advantages) and Power-Ups (which permanently increase the players' strength, speed, and the number of concurrent shots available). In combination, while not providing quite the addictive hook some less complex games might have, these elements provide adequate challenge to keep any gamer interested for some time. It should certainly provide a glimpse of, and practice for, virtual reality games of the future. Meanwhile, have a nice day!

– Ross Chamberlain

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	72%
Sound	76%
Playability	84%
OVERALL	78%

Spiderman: Return of the Sinister Six

LJN (Acclaim)
NES
1 Player

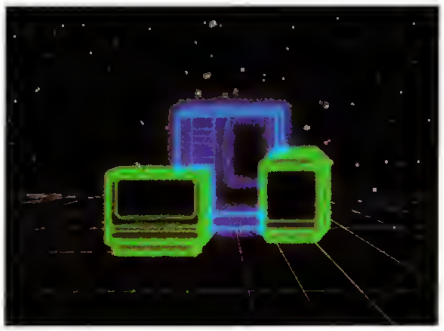
Six villains have put Spiderman on their hit list in this multi-phase side scroller based on Marvel Comics characters. Would-be world dictator Dr. Octopus has reassembled the Sinister Six, which includes Electro, the Sandman, Mysterio, The Vulture, and Hobgoblin. Only the wondrous wall-crawler can stop this six-pack of super-baddies.

The first stage shows Spidey trying to get inside the Power Station. After Spiderman gets through a gauntlet of tasters, arcing wires and other high voltage traps, armed thugs, missiles, mines, electrical surges and Electro confront the super-hero inside.

Spidy's rogue gallery has shown up to give him more trouble than ever.

A toxic waste dump overrun with rabid rats is the backdrop for the second phase. Here, gun-happy punks and their grainy leader, The Sandman, challenge Spiderman.

Mysterio rules over the house of illusion in level three. Webhead takes to the streets and rooftops for a confrontation with The Vulture on level four. Deadly



VIDEO GAME GALLERY

razor-bats assault the player on level five, which is set in the forest and Hobgoblin's cave.

It all comes down to a battle in Dr. Octopus' castle on level six. Thugs, trolls, and street vermin defend the outside of the stronghold, and the multi-armed maniac waits within.

The simple control employs various combinations of buttons and initiates many of Spiderman's signature maneuvers, bound to be familiar to comic book

Be careful. Electro can recharge his life meter, but Spiderman can't.

lovers. He can do acrobatics, wire webbing to disable evil-doers, or swing from building to building. He will also climb sheer walls and duck to avoid oncoming objects.

The graphics are average for NES, though the flicker is excessive in a few spots. The Spiderman figure is fairly well-animated and holds together during leaps, climbing, and somersaults. As in many 8-Bit cartridges, it isn't always easy to tell three dimensional objects from non-interactive background.

No one will confuse Spiderman: Return of the Sinister Six with the comic books that inspired it. That may be too much to ask of a NES title. This standard jump-and-shoot action title is moderately entertaining, if not wildly original.

— Arnie Katz

RATING	
Complexity	Easy
Graphics	65%
Sound	60%
Playability	82%
OVERALL	72%

Best of the Best — Championship Karate

ElectroBrain
SNES
1-2 Players

Martial arts have their origins mostly in Oriental lands which were invaded by the Japanese many centuries ago. Because the conquerors banned all traditional weapons, the locals were forced to improvise. Simple, everyday objects, such as a bamboo stick, were eventually transformed into deadly weapons through the mastery of special techniques.

The next step was the metamorphosis of the human body into a living weapon. Hands, feet, elbows and reflexes can perform seemingly superhuman feats through these deadly arts.

Best of the Best — Championship Karate simulates full-contact karate or kickboxing, which is basically boxing with use of the feet allowed. In fact, at least during the early days of the sport, a certain number of kicks per round were mandatory in order to keep the sport from being overrun by fading pro boxers.

The two contestants fight inside a standard three-rope ring and wear padded gloves slightly smaller than

Check out the competition, and change your options before the fight.

those used in pro boxing. In other words, players looking to throw devastating karate chops will be disappointed. Other than kicks, the only significant difference between full contact karate and boxing is the fact that kickboxers can strike with the back of their padded hands as well as the tip of the fist.

The best thing about this program is its flexibility. The option screen allows an impressive array of modifications, especially the ability to pick the specific moves which comprise the player-character's combat inventory. Although there are several dozen possible kicks and punches, not all are available to every fighter. Nonetheless, even a rank beginner can perform an impressive repertoire of spinning double-punches and round-

It is literally lights out for this guy. The referee will count the loser out.

house kicks. Each move is demonstrated in one of the multiple window displays.

Other features range from setting the number of rounds to physically altering the appearance of the player-character. Passwords allow access to better fighters and opponents. There is even a training area where the player can work on improving his fighter's ratings in resiliency, strength and reflexes.

Game perspective is a straight ahead view of the ring, with the ropes removed from the quadrant facing the gamer and the fighters seen from the side. Kickboxers can move forward or backward and make a 180 degree turn to face their opponent from the other side. A fighter's status during each fight can be easily tracked using a series of four overhead spotlights for each man. As the fighters absorb punishment, the top light dims until it goes out. When all four lights are off, the fighter is unconscious - his opponent has literally punched his lights out!

The graphics are quite good with some scenes, such as those of a fighter regaining his feet after a knockdown. They're so realistic, they appear to have been rotoscoped. The only complaint is with the relatively small size of the fighters. Gamers used to the larger characters seen in contests like

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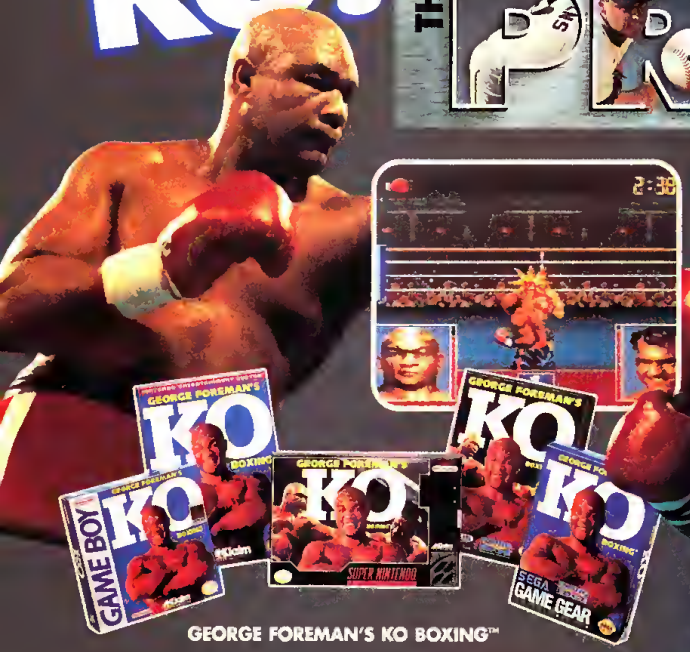

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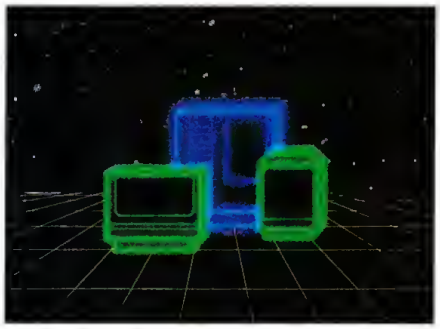


VIDEO GAME GALLERY

Street Fighter II may find the smaller combatants of **Best of the Best** disturbing, but they are sufficiently large that each move can be easily distinguished.

Overall, **Best of the Best** holds special appeal for fans of the genre, especially those who enjoy adding their own touch to a game.

– Bill Kunkel

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	79%
Sound	74%
Playability	84%
OVERALL	81%

Crüe Ball

Electronic Arts
Genesis
1-4 Players

A heavy metal maniac's nightmare awaits players of this video pinball table. Each player gets four balls, plus any bonus shots, to blast through several similar, yet distinctive pinball layouts. A few video pinball simulations have offered truer ball motion than Crüe Ball, but none surpasses it in sheer entertainment value. Crüe Ball's tri-level tables are packed with scoring opportunities; it's almost impossible to avoid scoring points. Video gamers are likely to take the opposite view that piling on the targets, bumpers, and kick-out holes is what makes **Crüe Ball** such a good video game. Producer Richard Robbins has opted for a hyperactive table that generates the intense action that video gamers expect without removing pinball strategy.

Although the Genesis controller isn't well-configured for pinball, no one will find the **Crüe Ball** control scheme hard to work. The direction pad controls the left flipper, while the C button triggers the right one. Pressing B gives the table a shake, and holding down and releasing A, launches the ball at the start of each round. Pressing the flipper buttons at the right instant activates a kick-out feature on designated lanes.

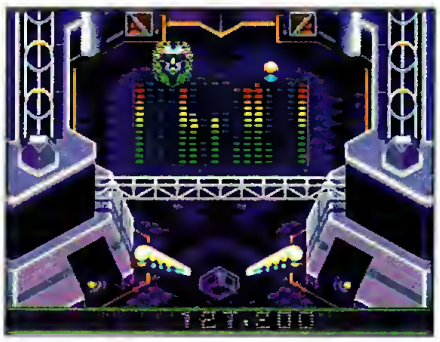
The jostling feature is very important in **Crüe Ball**, because no amount of shaking tilts the machine. It is especially effective for taking out the two rows of four drop targets at the top of the lower section of the playfield. Eliminating those targets is a major goal. When they're gone, the diamond-shaped speaker mesh in the center of the section pops up. Just like **Breakout** or **Arkanoid,** each section of the diamond disappears when the ball hits it.

After the player clears the pop-up, rolling the ball over every segment of the flat diamond that remains earns more points. Each flat segment turns color when the ball touches it, but they don't turn back, like **Q*bert**, on subsequent passes.

Completing the color change brings up two new sets of drop targets. Hitting all eight letters makes the launcher appear in the middle of the playfield. It sends a ball rocketing through the top of the playfield into a bonus round. The player guides the figure at the left edge of the screen and bashes baddies arrayed along the right edge of the screen. It's **Breakout** turned sideways, with creatures instead of bricks.

That's a good sample of the type of action featured in **Crüe Ball**. The game gets tougher as the player turns up the volume to higher levels by circling the knob at the top of the playfield.

Although Richard Robbins did a good job in most respects, the failure to polish some rough edges costs **Crüe Ball** rating points. It's unfortunate that some of the weak spots involve scoring, always a key facet of any pinball game.



Crüe Ball is a pinball simulation rocking to a heavy metal beat.

Our happy Head-Banger doesn't like to see his ball go down the drain.

The running score is posted at the bottom of the screen instead of at the top. This makes it difficult to check while tracking the ball. Although bonuses and the total are reported once after each ball, the score then vanishes until another ball is fired. **Crüe Ball** also doesn't track the high score during the play session.

Brian Schmidt gets good marks for his sound effects, and Mötley Crüe's background music is a great touch. The knock of ball against table is well-done, and the musical score dovetails with the heavy metal game-theme.

Crüe Ball is exciting and highly replayable. It's small flaws may cause an occasional wince, but most gamers will be too wrapped up in the action to feel anything but enjoyment.

— Arnie Katz

RATING	
Complexity	Easy
Graphics	86%
Sound	85%
Playability	84%
OVERALL	88%

Final Fantasy Mystic Quest

Square Soft
SNES
1 Player

Final Fantasy II was one of the first games for the fledgling Super Nintendo machine and the only role-playing game (RPG) available for the system at that time. SNES owners bought and loved it; it fully showed off the graphics modes and sound effects of the video game machine. **Final Fantasy II** also satisfied fans of the other RPGs in the game, sub-

titled **Mystic Quest (FFMQ)**. **FFMQ** expands the original game system and offers more game play, depth, locations and subplots.

The goal is to unlock the four doors and rid the monsters from the Focus Tower in the heart of the Final Fantasy World. The monsters in question stole the four Crystals of the Earth, locked themselves in the Tower and hid the magical coins that open the four Tower doors. The quest is laid out fairly linearly, and requires good role-playing skills and combat intuition.

FFMQ has a menu-based command system that provides access to the game's many weapons, items, armor and spells. Players must find the twelve spells in the game before they can use them. The spells are arranged in three groups of four: white magic, black magic and wizard magic. Meters show vitality (health) and spell power levels. Potions restore these meters to maximum after players lose health in battles or cast spells.

Play takes place in an overhead map and the locations accessed via map icons. Flashing arrows indicate possible paths and lead to icons for towns and dungeons in which the game character can move around freely. Gray arrows show future paths accessible only after certain actions, solved puzzles or conquered monsters. These arrows give **FFMQ** some of its linearity, but help point players in the right direction.

Square has designed this game with the beginning role-player in mind.

Combat screens are separate from exploration screens. Battles take place in rounds with the player's options to run, use an item, cast a spell or attack until the monster or player dies or the player escapes. Combat is important in **FFMQ** because it increases experience and skills, which will help later on.

Graphics and sound effects in **FFMQ** are top-notch, and bring the World alive on the Super NES. There are some interesting monsters and locations in the game, and lots of hidden items and treasure. Allies pop in and out of the plot and are especially useful in combat to take care of tougher opponents and boss creatures. It is unnecessary to map, but pay close attention to the hints and messages from certain characters and to the locations of seemingly inaccessible doors. Dungeon layouts are sometimes tricky, but none of the challenges in **FFMQ** are particularly difficult.

FFMQ is a fairly solid, enjoyable RPG, but not anything groundbreaking or new. Fans of past **Final Fantasy** games will jump right in, but others may need to get used to the system, particularly battles. Sub-quests are laid out intelligently and the mixture of fantasy, magic and combat will keep players entranced for many hours.

— *Russ Ceccola*

RATING	
Complexity	Easy
Graphics	88%
Sound	81%
Playability	85%
OVERALL	86%

Death Valley Rally

Sunsoft
SNES
1 Player

One thing that americans seem to share, one common point for most of us who grew up since the late 1960s, are Saturday morning cartoons. We woke up at 6:00 in the morning, ran downstairs to grab a bowl of whatever over-sugared cereal was available and flopped-down in front of the boob-tube for five or six hours of multi-color, hyper-kinetic blurs of light and sound. Cartoon overload. The rest of the day, most of us were unleashed and sent outside to burn off the energy gathering within us all morning long.

Marvin Martian even has a cameo appearance in Death Valley Rally.

Over the last 25 years, there has been one series of cartoons constantly on TV. In fact, for 35 years before that, these bits of animation entertained us, our parents, and even our grandparents, in the movie theaters. They are called Looney Tunes, and they have endured for six decades.

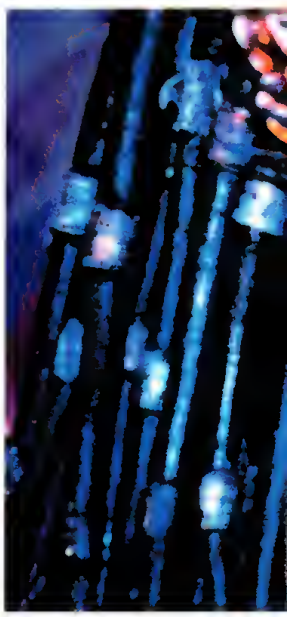
While attemps have been made in the past to bring these cartoons to the video game format, the real feel seems to have eluded game designers until now. Death Valley Rally allows the gamer to step into a Road Runner cartoon, or rather run into it at about mach 5, feathers and beak blazing.

There are bound to be comparisons made between this game and Sonic the Hedgehog on the Genesis. It is true that both games feature characters who move at an amazing pace; however, once you get past the speed of the games, the comparisons break down.

Death Valley Rally comes off as a game of maze-tag. The Coyote is "it" and

THE GOOD

THE UGLY!



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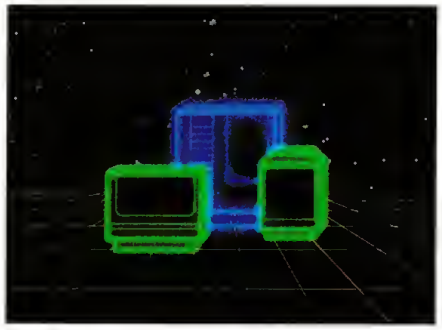


VIDEO GAME GALLERY

you must get to the end of the level before he catches you. Each level is broken down into stages, where the Coyote employs many of his Acme devices made famous in the cartoons (does everyone remember the Acme Bat Man suit?). When the checkered flag is crossed, the player is treated to a brief animation of the Coyote being pummeled in a variety of ways.

At the end of each level, the Road Runner must defeat one of the Coyote's big inventions, like the Acme Catapult.

Each level is treated like its own cartoon, with its own title and setting. The Coyote chases our fine flightless feathered friend through the desert, a construction zone, a mine shaft, a carnival train, and even Mars, complete with Marvin and his instant martians.

The graphics, animation, and sound are all top-notch. The game play is smooth and the movement of the Road Runner is absolutely precise. The way the Road Runner jumps may take some getting used to. While he can't fly, he seems to float pretty well. The only weapon is his beak, perfect for taking care of the pesky creatures standing in the way, and for eating bird seed for that extra burst of speed.

The only negative that jumps to mind is that the difficulty level is a little high for the younger gamers who will inevitably be attracted to this title.

While not being overly unique, this game wins points all around for its execution. Anyone looking for a game filled with fast action, great graphics, and a whole lot of laughs, don't run past **Death Valley Rally.**

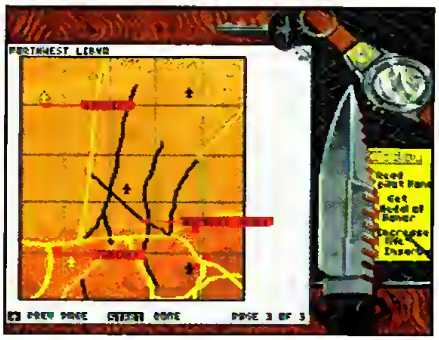
— Marc Camron

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	94%
Sound	89%
Playability	92%
OVERALL	92%

LHX Attack Chopper

Electronic Arts
Genesis
1 Player

Grab your flight suit and jump into the worlds most suphisticated helicopter. You have been recruited by the military to fly many top secret missions into enemy territory. Armed with 30 million dollars worth of helicopter and weaponry, this chopper is a force! You have the choice of flying and Apache or LHX

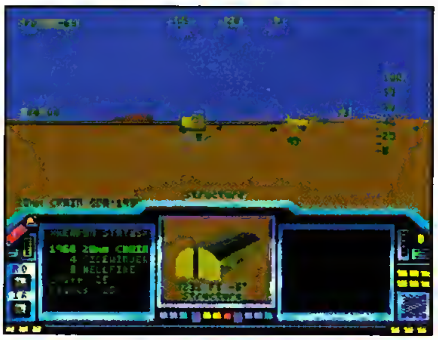


Accept your orders and plan out your mission on the provided map.

experimental helicopter. Use the onboard computer to view the enemies, plot strategy and find targets. Using the equipment to the fullest capacity is the only chance of survival, so learn quickly. The player is faced with many important missions to fly. Mission goals vary, but all have one main objective: stay alive! Check the instruments, and it's time to take off!

LHX Attack Chopper is one of many flight simulators to appear on the Genesis, and one of the most sophisticated. This game uses a polygon world (as most of these flight sims do) to deliver a simulated enviroment for the player to play around in. Most flight sims converted from PC to Genesis suffer in a few areas, the first one being speed. LHX is smooth and quick in comparison to the others on the market. In addition, many different views and perspectives can be brought up for the player to use in various situations, mostly for a visual effect. These views include in the cockpit,

behind, front, either side, circling, target-to-ship or ship-to-target, and a few others. The missile view is incredible! When this view is active, the player views the cockpit; but when a missile is fired, the view of the missile becomes active, giving the gamer a full view of the missile and its travels all the way to the target. Ka-blooey! These views, besides being fun, are necessary for the different aspects of the game, and making proper use of them adds playability! The sounds in this game are good, from the explosions to the rockets. Digitized voices are heard from time to time, giving you messages and warnings. These voices are a little muttered, but very understandable. The many missions are progressive and



This simulation really gives players the feel of flying an attack chopper.

provide a slow learning curve for the many functions of the helicopter. The helicopter controls are unique and comfortable, but using every button on the Genesis pad takes a little getting used to. Different combinations of buttons also provide the player with control over his computer and view screen function; this is a little clumsy at first, but it becomes second nature after one game. If you like flight sims of any sort, you will definitely like this one. Very well rounded, very in-depth and most importantly, very fun!!!

— Franklin Horowitz

RATING	
Complexity	Easy
Graphics	83%
Sound	80%
Playability	87%
OVERALL	83%

Home Alone

Sega
Genesis
1 Player

Based upon the insanely popular movie, **Home Alone** puts the player in charge of Kevin, the cunning little boy who has been left behind by his mother. Kevin felt that this vacation from his family would be great if it weren't for the Wet Bandits.

Harry and Marv comprise this band of thieves that rob the rich neighborhoods and then flood the looted homes. Kevin now takes on the responsibilty of saving the neighborhood from the notorious Wet Bandits.

Sled around the main screen and choose which house to protect.

The action begins with Kevin on his super sled. If he runs over the children's snowmen, various power-up items like coal, snowballs and tires may be located underneath. You only have a designated amount of time before the Wet Bandits choose a house to loot.

The player must cruise around to locate their ominous blue van. If Kevin can enter the house before the Wet Bandits do, the player can select items from his inventory to set up traps, just like in the movie.

Give the Wet Bandits a hot hand by placing a torch on the doorknob, make 'em dance by placing jacks on the floor and have them slip and slide by putting grease on the walkway. If these traps just will not cut it, Kevin has the brains to assemble his own booby traps by utilizing three different items: a platform, an operator and ammo. By putting items into each slot and clicking on the wrench icon, Kevin can assemble his own traps to really put the fright on the crooks.

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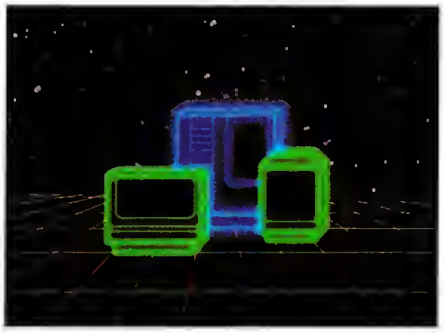


VIDEO GAME GALLERY

There are a total of five houses for Kevin to save. Each of the houses presents their own unique challenges for Kevin and the crooks to maneuver through.

Don't accidentally fall into traps or the house's built-in defenses.

The Mansion is Kevin's own home and contains three levels to explore. This place has exactly what the crooks need. Since Kevin is more familiar with this home, he has a better chance of stopping the crooks on his own turf.

The ultra modern house is full of high-tech equipment and a state-of-the-art security system that will definitely shock the player. Ride the transport tubes to reach the level of the home.

The old house is a run-down shack that houses some ancient relics. The floors often break away and many surprises are strewn throughout.

The Colonial House is the largest of the group with five floors to explore. There are not many items to steal, but the Wet Bandits would be more than happy to flood it!

Kevin has a weapons inventory where the player can select from various guns and ammunition. The BB Gun will stun the crooks while the Pain Gun will send them scurrying away. When the crooks are in the house, the only way to rid them is to get their pain meter to skyrocket.

Home Alone is a nice adaptation of the movie but the control just isn't precise and the game can get rather repetitive after a few plays. Note: the game is rather difficult for kids.

— Danyon Carpenter

RATING	
Complexity	Hard
Graphics	75%
Sound	68%
Playability	70%
OVERALL	71%

Rampart

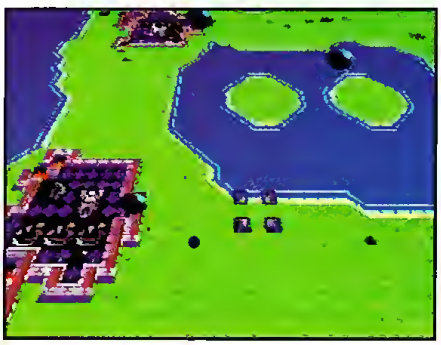
Electronic Arts
SNES
1-2 Players

Making its umpteenth video game appearance, this time on the Super NES, Rampart is given a whole new set of bells and whistles without losing the integrity of the highly appealing game play originally found in the coin-op.

Rampart thrusts the player into the role of a medival conflict between a nation littered with castles which must be defended against an armada of invading tyrants.

Each round of play takes place on islands and beachfronts throughout the kingdom. As you move level by level through the game, the layout and positioning of the play areas, not to mention to placement of the castles which must be defended, conspire to add to the difficulty.

Game play progresses in three parts once the initial phase of selecting a



The 3-D perspective adds to the overall look and feel of the game.

home base is completed. You must first move a computer-selected number of cannons into place. The only form of offense against the invading ships, the

The unique gunship rounds are also unique to the SNES Rampart.

number of cannons allowed is dictated by the amount of land you successfully occupy. The battle is joined once the cannons are mounted. Moving a cursor around the screen to select targets, each cannon fires a single shell before reloading (a short delay that ends once the projectile finds its mark or splashes into the water). Each cannonball takes a high arching pattern across the playfield, and at the height of battle dozens of shots will criss-cross the screen. The fight ends after a few seconds, and then the final stage of play, rebuilding the walls that surround the castles, begins. Maneuvering blocks reminds one of Tetris, as the player must fully encompass at least one castle (and more importantly, the castles that possess cannons within their domain) lest the game ends with the enemy in control.

The basic integrity of both the coin-op and previous home versions remains. In addition to the standard game, however, Electronic Arts has taken advantage of the power that the Super NES has to provide. Equipped with an options screen that enables the player to tailor the difficulty in a number of ways, this 16-Bit version of Rampart also features a unique pseudo-three-dimensional version of the game on a tilted three-quarter perspective reminscient of F-Zero or Mario Kart. While this unique version is visually and graphically impressive, the overall slant of the game play actually detracts from the enjoyment of the game due to the somewhat limited visibility that the angle provides.

The game has a very addictive quality that remains high even as play elevates to the most challenging levels. The difficulty begins tends to get slightly skewed during the last few rounds, where the enemy ships and ground forces (which spill onto the mainland whenever an enemy vessel successfully makes its way next to the play area) begin to multiply and travel more rapidly than

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OR
YOUR MONEY BACK

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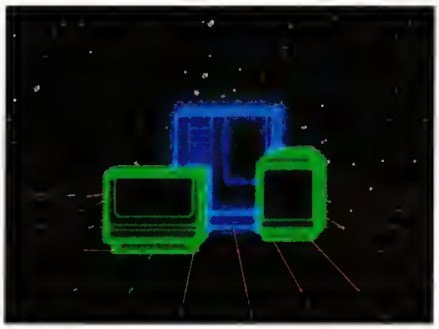

VIDEO GAME GALLERY

expected. The game almost becomes too frustrating with the addition of fire balls that cannot be built upon, and ships that come into port faster than they can be blown out of the water, but instead ends up as one of the hardest games to beat.

Franz Lansinger, the programming mastermind behind the classic Crystal Castles coin-op, has done an outstanding job of capturing the magic of Rampart for Super NES users while, at the same time, expanding the scope of the original title. This game is a bit repetitive, but the quality of play stands up to the manner in which it's been designed. The action is definitely cerebral, but in the end it remains fun nevertheless.

— Shey Stevens

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	62%
Sound	65%
Playability	91%
OVERALL	87%

Predator 2

Arena
Genesis
1 Player

Predator 2 for the Genesis is one of a long line of games to be transformed from a popular science fiction movie. The player assumes the role of the Danny Glover character who must follow the Predator around and protect the people of America as well as trying to destroy the clever alien. (If it bleeds, we can kill it!) The game takes the player through seven levels that are designed around scenarios from the movie. These scenes include, the rooftops, the streets, down in the subways and eventually into alien's ship. Besides just traversing through each level and surviving, the player must rescue hostages on each level. There are a set amount of hostages that must be rescued before being allowed to continue to the next level. Sound easy? Well it might be if the Predator was not lurking over the gamer's shoulder around every corner with his deadly laser spotting weapon. He's after the player and he is after the hostages, so move fast or there will be body parts flying everywhere.

To help defend against this slightly angry alien, the game provides a gun with unlimited ammunition and several limited weapons that can be picked up along the way. These weapons include an Uzi, spread shot, grenade, spear and flying disks. The game is played at a three quarter view, so game play exists on a diagonal level. There are three different skill levels mixed with a password feature to help the gamer through the more difficult levels.

The game play on Predator 2 is good, but a bit repetitive through the entire game. The graphics are nicely done, accurately portraying scenes from the movie. In between the rounds, lovely digitized pictures from the original movie are painted under the game info. Sounds and music are good, but not exceptional.

Overall, Predator 2 lacks some items that would have made this game one step better. The secondary weapon system is annoying, because once you run out of one weapon, the next weapon does not automatically default to the ready position. It is a little bothersome to worry about pushing the select weapon button to call up the next weapon, when

The perspective of Predator 2 is reminiscent of the game Smash TV.

it should just fall into place automatically. This becomes obvious when fighting a Boss. Items are left when enemies are killed, but these items serve no global purpose other than awarding points when they are gathered up. Since you are constantly picking these items up, it would have been nice to have them counted as

The game play is easy, follow the arrows and shoot at everything.

points at the end of the round and multiplied based on how many men you had left or how many overall you acquired. Basically there are only two objectives in this game: staying alive and freeing the hostages. This makes for a great action game, but it lacks overall strategy, which would have made the game better

— Franklin Horowitz

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	75%
Sound	70%
Playability	80%
OVERALL	75%

Sonic the Hedgehog 2

Sega
Genesis
1-2 Players

When Sonic the Hedgehog appeared on the U.S. market, the sales literally soared to new heights and brought Sega the added boost that they needed. With Alex Kidd quickly dwindling as Sega's mascot, Sonic the Hedgehog has taken to immediate success and certainly shows no sign of slowing down. What could possibly replace this exciting action title?

Enter **Sonic the Hedgehog 2**. More levels, more speed and more action topple the first Sonic by a landslide! The original Sonic Team has been feverishly working to make this episode even better than the original.

To begin, Sonic now has a two-tailed buddy named Tails. Tails loves to mimic Sonic's moves. He will follow Sonic around wherever he goes, but occasionally, Sonic's super speed may leave Tails in the dust.

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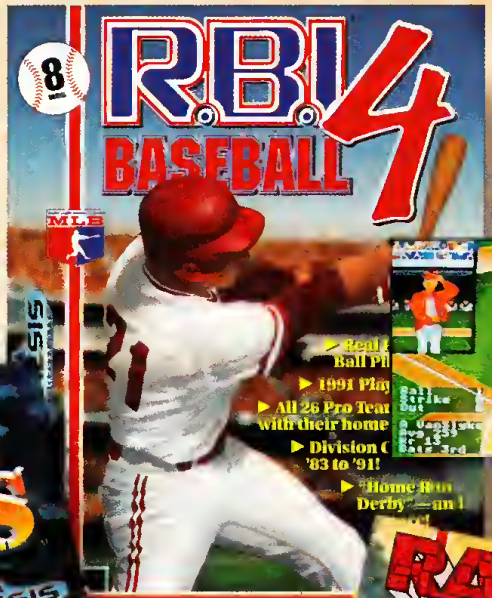

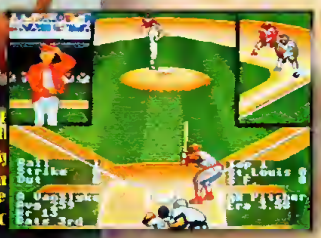

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TENGEN
VIDEO GAMES

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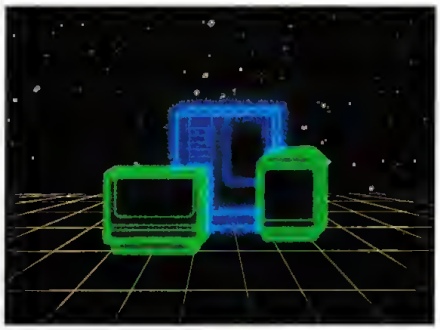

VIDEO GAME GALLERY

Sonic and Tails both have charge-up techniques that permit them to spin with blistering speed and launch themselves forward with determined ferocity.

There are plenty of additions to this sequel, including the corkscrew.

The addition of Tails to the game offers the capability to have two players competing on a split-screen for coins and points as they search out for the big guy himself, Dr. Robotnik!

The game begins with a romp through the Green Hill Zone. Much has changed through the previous adventure because the entire landscape has been altered. This level now contains more traps and enemies awaiting Sonic and Tails until they face Robotnik in his roving dune buggy with the nasty rotary drill.

Another level includes the Casino Knight Zone. Do you remember the Spring Yard Zone from the original? In the Casino Knight Zone, Sonic and Tails are full-fledged pinballs through a labyrinth of blistering speed and bouncing off bumpers. If Sonic can lodge himself in the slot machine, bonus points are the reward.

The Dust Hill Zone is set in a dimly lit mining shaft complete with the carts and haphazard downfalls. Here is where Tails comes in handy as your little shadow. Tails can run in different areas than Sonic and can collect rings for the player.

The Chemical Plant Zone is a race for your life through a booming metropolis. While traps are not as apparent, the capability for speed on this level is incredible! The player can simply run, run, and run some more this fast paced stage. Of course, pitfalls occasionally await those who feel that speed is more important the jumping.

The Sky Chase Zone is one of the most original scenes yet. Tails is the pilot of a speedy bi-plane and escorts Sonic to the final stage of play, the Sky base. Here is where Sonic will face Dr. Robotnik in close combat for another final match.

Sonic the Hedgehog 2 offers the same exciting play as the first, but the welcome additions of two-player simultaneous play and more levels only enhance this exciting title. Sonic shows no signs of slowing down!

— Danyon Carpenter

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	95%
Sound	90%
Playability	92%
OVERALL	91%

Tyrants

Virgin Games
Genesis
1 Player

Those of us who are longtime members of the Association for the Strategically Inept have watched people play games like SimCity and Populous, and have patiently waited for a strategy game to come along that doesn't have a learning curve longer than most modern relaitonships.

Offense and defense are equally important to overcome later levels.

Finally, the wait has ended! **Tyrants** is a translation of the computer game MEGA lo MANIA, and has been brought over with all of the features intact.

It seems that four gods have gotten together to compete over a planet. To triumph and win control of the planet, the player must conquer twenty-eight islands. The islands are placed in groups of three called Epochs, and after each Epoch is conquered the player is given a password to access the next group of islands.

The player starts with one hundred humans to be used as pawns. A decision must be made when starting each

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John

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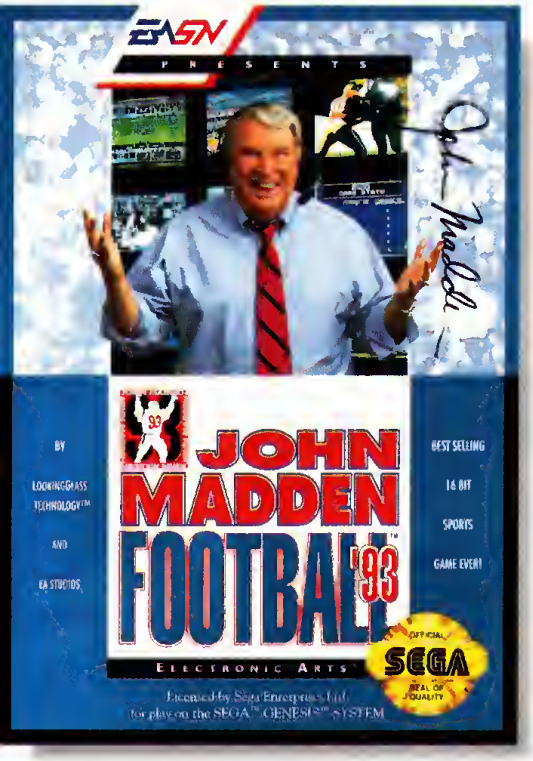

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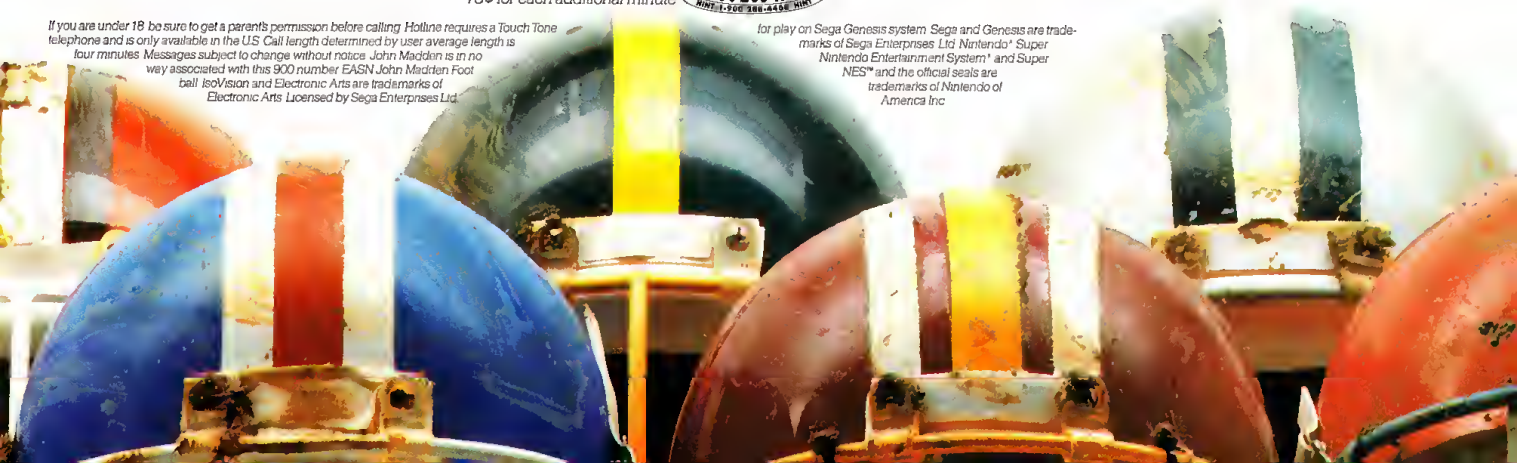
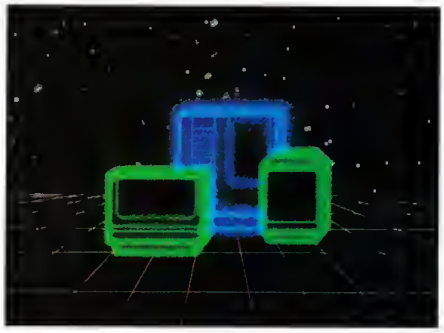




VIDEO GAME GALLERY

island as to how many humans to place there. The player is given one hundred extra humans for each new Epoch, and any humans left over from the last Epoch are added to the count.

It is important to use as few humans as possible for each island, as the higher the level, the more the extra humans will come in handy.

After deciding on the number of humans, the player must place his tower on a section of the island. On each island, the player must battle for control against one to three of the other gods. When the game starts, it is 9500 BC. Your humans have the capacity to learn and build things, but inventing takes time. There are three categories of inventions: offensive weapons, defensive weapons, and shields which help to repair your buildings after an attack. The ability to gather exposed elements and to reproduce are carried out automatically.

Every conquered island gives you a new title; every Epoch a bigger god.

Each invention must be designed, and this takes manpower and time. The more workers placed on an invention the faster it is completed. Simple weapons like sticks and stones become available immediately. More complicated weapons must be built, and require elements to do so.

The player must decide how many humans to place on each task. And to make matters more confusing, if a group of humans is set to explore a different section of the island, they may get together and build another tower. This means another completely separate group for the player to control and watch over.

If a deep mine is necessary to collect certain elements, your humans can build a mine; for manufacturing complicated weapons a factory must be built.

Don't think that players can just go about their business uninterrupted. They must be prepared to defend themselves when attacked, and to be the attacker when the time is right.

What helps set this game apart from other strategy contests is the progression of events. The game starts slow and adds new tasks at a reasonable rate, allowing the player time to learn the various functions. While most other games use a similar approach (few will make a player jump into the most difficult scenario) **Tyrants** seems to succeed better than most.

Players will start with stones and progress to nuclear weapons and beyond. As new weapons are built, your civilization progresses through the appropriate years. It is interesting to see the weapons advance, as well as the design of the buildings. The progression through the various periods in human history keeps the game interesting. Though the play can be somewhat repetitive, the game never crosses that fine line to become boring.

The graphics and sound are nothing to write home about, but this is the type of game that depends on game play, not graphic nicities. The game play here is right on. There are even three speed adjustments so players can keep the events progressing at their own pace.

For any who have been looking for a strategy game that is challenging with out being overly difficult to learn, this is the game. **Tyrants** allows ordinary people to become gods for an afternoon. What could be more fun than being the biggest kid on the planet, even if it is only for a little while?

— Marc Camron

RATING	
Complexity	Hard
Graphics	74%
Sound	72%
Playability	85%
OVERALL	82%

Gargoyle's Quest 2

Capcom
NES
1 Player

Capcom has created many different versions of their classic arcade game, **Ghosts and Goblins**. There has been the sequel, Ghouls and Ghosts for the Genesis and the practically forgotten SuperGrafx system, and Super Ghouls and Ghosts for the Super Nintendo. However, the most creative extension of this series has to be **Gargoyle's Quest** for the GameBoy, and now **Gargoyle's Quest 2** for the NES.

Traveling between towns and action scenes uses a role-play perspective.

Instead of playing Arthur, the knight, the player takes on the person of a demon named Firebrand.

While the other G&G games were straight action fests, **Gargoyle's Quest** adds some adventure and role-playing elements. The quest itself is linear. Tasks must be completed in order to advance in ability and be able to progress through the game. Firebrand can jump, fly, cling to walls, and breath various forms of magical fire. There are towns to visit where Firebrand may rest, receive a password, and get hints by talking to people. You can even trade in vials found on the quest or won in battle for extra lives.

The graphics and sound are average. The game moves smoothly and the different actions are easy to master. One stumbling block is the way the difficulty level increases when fighting certain bosses, but this is minor and players should not get stuck in one place for very long.

The quest itself is long and detailed, and the balance between action and adventure is right on the money. However, those used to better incarnations of either may find this game very two-dimensional.

Fighting the bosses is hard because the space to dodge is very limited.

It is good to see companies still supporting the 8-Bit Nintendo with good games, but it is obvious that the bulk of their attention is being focused elsewhere. **Gargoyle's Quest 2** is a good game, but is by no means revolutionary. Those who are still supporting their 8-Bit machine may want to give this a try. Hopefully, Capcom will see fit to transport this series to the SNES. Until then, remember to fly for the closest wall, and don't spare the vials.

— Marc Camron

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	65%
Sound	64%
Playability	72%
OVERALL 70%	

SUPER MARIO KART

Nintendo
SNES
1-2 Players

Mario's latest video game escapade sees Nintendo's cash cow deviating from his normal scrolling adventures and jumping into a totally new type of game play. Along with fellow Mario pals ranging from Luigi to Yoshi to Donkey Kong Jr., the Nintendo mascot takes to the road in a game that brings a new variety of twists to action that is reminiscent of F-Zero. Do the enhancements work? In

In the 1 player game, the second screen can be a rear-view mirror.

absolutely every type of play contained on this cartridge the answer is a resounding, and very fun, "yes".

The game embraces the same three-dimensional feel of earlier SNES racing games like F-Zero, and then throws in a number of enhancements, options and power-ups which drastically change the dynamics of the overall interaction.

The game contains two different speeds, each complete with three different sets of courses that contain five tracks apiece. As long as the player continues to finish within the top four racers, the game continues. Depending on how the player finishes, a varying number of points are awarded. The player (out of the eight featured) that ends up with the most points at the end of the five races is presented with an award.

The player can select any one of the eight different racers. Although each character rides atop the same type of kart, each has their own set of strengths and weaknesses ranging from higher top speeds to better handling and control.

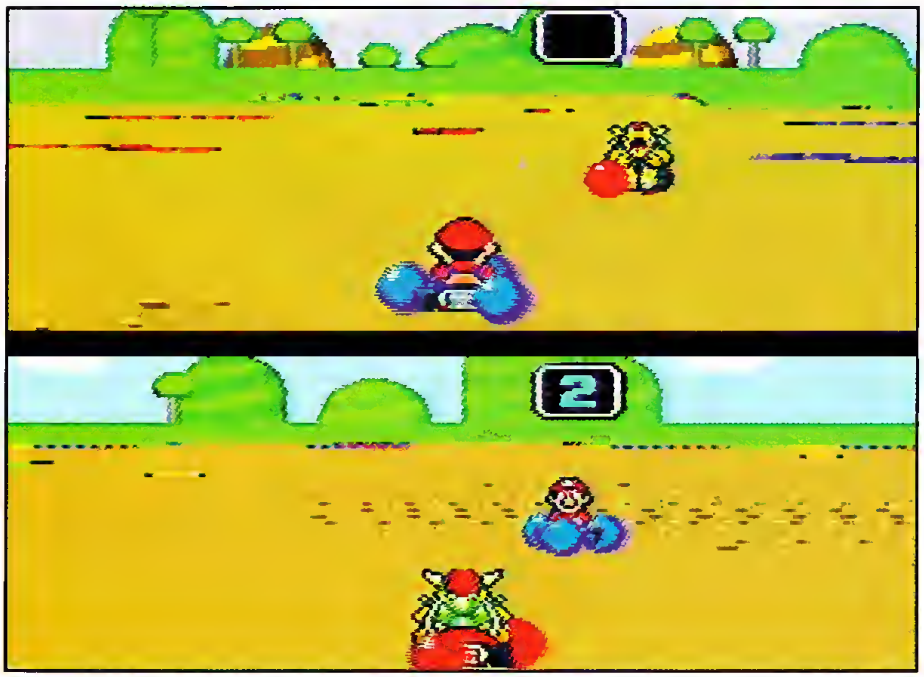
Beyond the basic play mechanics of the races, the game contains several unique features that definitely add to the cartridge's scope. First and foremost are the addition of question mark boxes from the regular Mario games. Racing a kart over these special icons initializes the power-up box. The box will cycle through a variety of enhancements that range from turtles which can be thrown at other racers to knock them off-course to stars for invincibility to new power-ups like lightning that turn the competition into miniatures of their former selves.

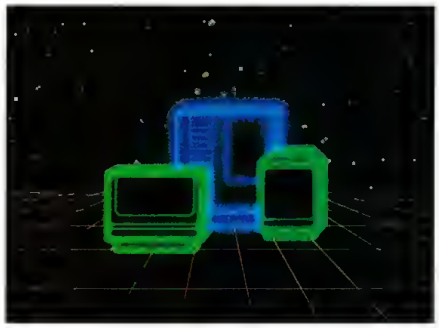
Other additions to the basic racing

You can also monitor the entire track on with the overhead screen.

game play include jumping which becomes an essential and required part of the action, especially at the higher levels where precipices and water hazards litter the roadways.

Out of the many options that are included in Super Mario Kart, the best are the replay features that allow players to watch their successful races over and over again. The player can even race against himself with this feature! Surprisingly, tactical racing can play a large part in this game, and the gamer will have to try many techniques to be successful.





VIDEO GAME GALLERY

The two-player features allows the player to compete in one of two ways. Whether it's part of the normal racing action (where the rear-view and map sequences normally featured on the bottom-half of the screen are replaced with the second player's perspective) or the special combat mode that allows two racers to go at it head-to-head in a number of different mazes, Super Mario Kart has some excellent one-on-one action.

Super Mario Kart has a fast-paced feel with plenty of in-depth play. While the game play isn't totally revolutionary, the action does deviate from what we've been exposed to in the past to make this new driving adventure something worthwhile to add to a collection, whether you're a fan of driving titles or Mario.

— *Shey Stevens*

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	65%
Sound	65%
Playability	90%
OVERALL	93%

Robocop 3

Ocean America
SNES
1 Player

We all know the story. In the future, crime is even worse than it is now, and the city has taken certain steps to help curb the problem. They have taken a police officer who was mortally wounded by a bunch of criminals, and replaced the better part of his body with a machine. Dirty Harry meets the Six Million Dollar Man.

With the third installment of the movie series around the corner, the release of **Robocop 3** will probobly come as no surprise to anyone.

There is an interesting twist to this epside, though. It seems that OCS is sending in officers to clean up old Detroit, and make room for the buildng of shiny new Delta City. When our hero sees innocent inhabitants being treated unjustly, he decides that the OCS rehab officers are the real bad guys, and decides to clean up their act.

Shooter fans will be most attracted to this game. The play is reminicient of the arcade game. Robocop has a gun, and is able to shoot forward, up, or up at an angle. He can also shoot while crouched down, and jump. There are several different weapons that Robocop can find along the way, such as the three-way shot and the big gun. It is important to keep an eye on your ammunition though, because without bullets the walking trashcan is a sitting duck. He can punch the badguys, but who wants to punch a guy with a shotgun?

The graphics are good, but seem to lack any sort of a punch. The sound is average. Where strides have been made over the 8-Bit versions of Robocop is in game play. Robocop is much easier to control, and this makes for a much more enjoyable game.

The biggest problem with the game is every time the character dies, he is sent back to the start of the level. This quickly becomes annoying, and intermediate checkpoints would have been appreciated.

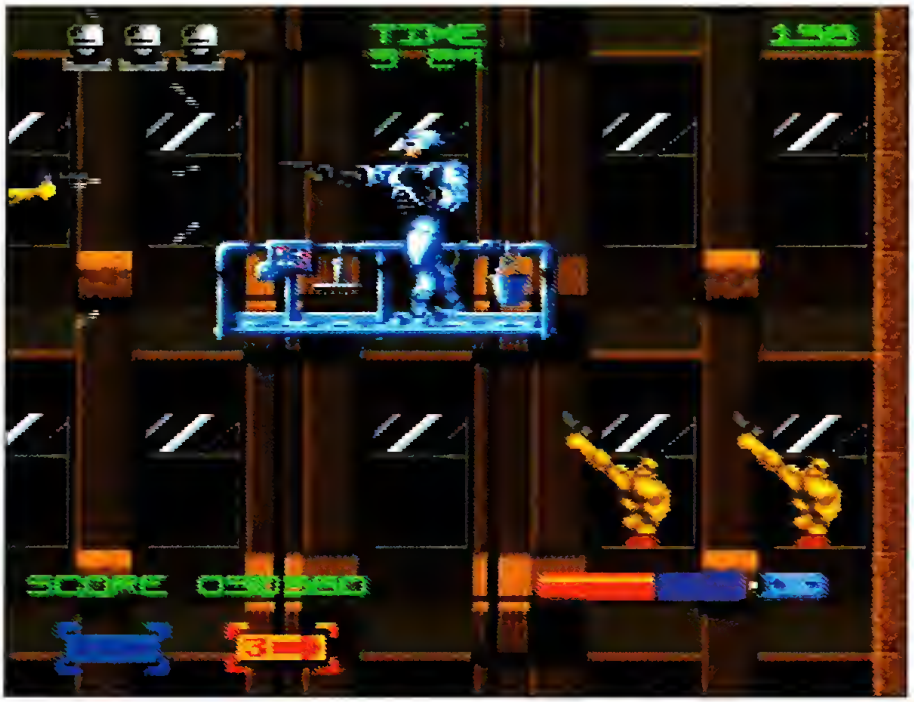
Overall, the game seems to be about a year behind its competition. By no means is it a bad game, or is anything specifically wrong with it, but it represents nothing new, either. For players who are tired of walk and shoot, walk and shoot scenarios, this is not the game for you. For fans of the arcade game or movies, this game does give Robocop a good showing, and should supply many hours of side-scrolling action.

Maybe if there is a Robocop 4, they can add a new twist to the character. If not, it's time to transfer him to traffic duty and to come up with a new hero.

— *Marc Camron*

When fighting well armed scum, it's nice to have some help on your side.

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	70%
Sound	65%
Playability	65%
OVERALL	68%

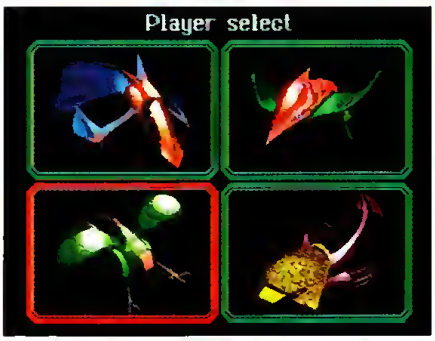


Bio Hazard

Sega
Genesis
1 Player

Sega has designed a new horizontal scrolling shooter named **Bio Hazard**. This cart has an original theme, although similar concepts were used in Sage's Creation's Insector-X. While the actual plot is very hard to determine, it seems like you've been shrunk down and placed inside some kind of weird bio-mechanical ship. You mission is to infiltrate a colony of mutated bio-mechanoids and other unnatural dangers. You must fly through all kinds of environments ranging from jungles to forests and underground caverns dripping with deadly elements.

The graphics are very good for the limited color palette on the Genesis. The color choices are all well blended and the plethora of enemies look at home in



Bio Hazard offers four different bug ships for the player to choose from.

the various settings. Each enemy is drawn with lots of detail and the animation is incredible. Most of the enemy creatures have a metallic insect-like appearance. The backgrounds are very elaborate and there is a large amount of detail in the parallax scrolling foregrounds. The weapon animations are also very good. The best example is the homing laser; it wraps around and destroys any moving object on the screen. The movement is smooth and looks very realistic. Some of the larger sprites in the game are animated extremely well and are very fliud and lifelike. The bosses are pretty big and also are enjoyable to look at as well as tough to destroy.

Sad to say, the music and sound effects in this game are not all that impressive. The soundtracks can be considered mediocre at best, and the sound effects are typical of the Genesis genre. Nothing to write home about.

The game play is decent and has a variety of techniques. You choose between four diffferent ships and each has an arsenal of four weapons from a choice of seven different kinds. You also have an option unit similar to the one in Last Resort for Neo•Geo. You can rotate the option 360° for a full range of firepower. There are eight levels and the game can be difficult at times.

The graphics are excellent, bringing forth a feeling of depth and texture.

Bio Hazard is an above average shooter at best. Graphically, the game really shines, but it falls short in almost all other major aspects. The game play is good, but the game is too easy and the action gets repetitve midway through the contest, and there aren't enough power-ups to keep things interesting. A decent effort that never gets too exciting and has a short lifespan.

— Martin Alessi

The bosses, like this mutant crab, are large and very well animated.

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	75%
Sound	62%
Playability	69%
OVERALL	68%

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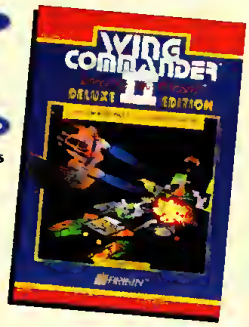

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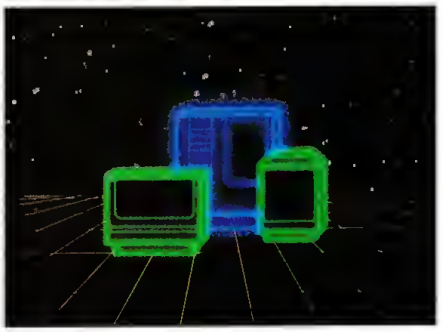


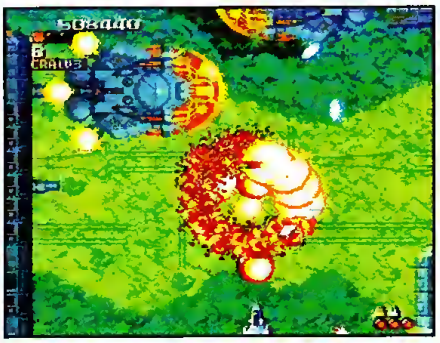
VIDEO GRME GALLERY

Space Megaforce

Toho
SNES
1 Player

Once in a while there is a shooter that goes beyond the boundaries of simple mindless destruction. **Space Mega Force** is a perfect example of taking a solid game play concept like the vertical scrolling shooter, and making it into a revolutionary game by today's standards. The plot is the typical "aliens invade the earth and you are the only hope for our endangered home planet." Take off in the experimental starship and confront the invading alien armada!

Graphically, this is one of the most impressive shooters for the Super NES. Everything from the individual alien attacks ships to the animation of the ship's weapons is flawless. The backgrounds are truly impressive and show off unique use of Mode 7. For example, in the first level, as the gamer flies over the clouds, each cloud is enhanced with a translucent look and a line scroll similar to Thunder Force 3's infamous lava background. The boss characters are also manipulated with Mode 7 and move about very quickly for their size. Level 2 also puts Mode 7 to the test. The entire level rotates and scales towards the player in the background to give the feeling of giant space station flying towards him as he battles drone attackers in the foreground. The effect is so well done that some gamers may actually become dizzy from the smoothness and liquid motion. Effects like these are used throughout each intense level of the game.



Powerful enemies fill the screen from every conceivable direction.

This cart is also extremely impressive in the audio department and has an incredible musical score. The various level soundtracks are very upbeat and resemble tunes from popular bands such as New Order and other new wave and hip-hop styles of music. The complexity of the music is also very impressive, with lots of layers and high quality instruments throughout. The sound effects are equally impressive and digitized voices call out the weapon the player has picked up. The explosions are fantastic as well as digitally sampled at a low frequency and they really pack a punch on a decent hi-fi stereo.

The game play is about as good as a shooter can get! The control is fluid and response is immediate. If one likes having lots of powerful weapons, this cart has 'em. This game has eight main weapons that can power-up to six times for a total of 48 different available weapons! The gamer can also select between two different weapon modes for each weapon, simply by pressing the Right Button. For example, if the player has weapon 2, which is a straight forward laser, hitting the Right Button will transform the weapon from regular mode to a heat-seeking laser that takes out anything before it gets in his path! A Super Bomb is available which obliterates everything on the screen with one press of a button. The game is broken up into 12 levels and each level has plenty of dangers and hidden power-ups. At the end of each level the player will be confronted by a huge boss. These bosses vary in difficulty and are extremely smart in the later levels. There are also other ways to play, such as a special game where the player races against the timer to get a high score.

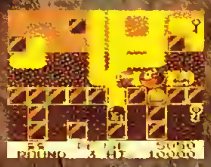
Overall, **Space Megaforce** is a phenomenal cartridge and has reset the standards by which Super NES shooters will now be judged. The game has a few minor flaws; one is that it will be a bit too easy for hardcore gamers, even though the difficulty is adjustable. The second minor flaw is the lack of a simultaneous two player mode. Other than these shortcomings, **Space Megaforce** is about as close to a perfect shooter as you can get. It has the potential to be an instant classic and has easily become a personal favorite.

Space Megaforce makes extensive use of the Super Nintendo's Mode 7.

— Martin Alessi

RATING	
Complexity	Hard
Graphics	95%
Sound	96%
Playability	96%
OVERALL	96%

SCORE BIG



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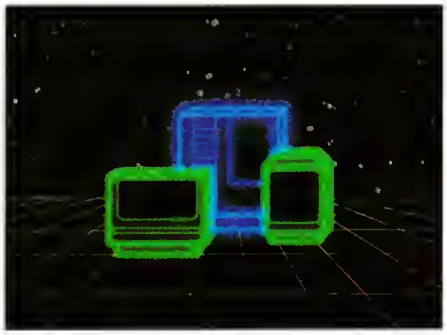


VIDEO GAME GALLERY

The Menacer 6-in-1

Sega
Genesis - Menacer
1 Player

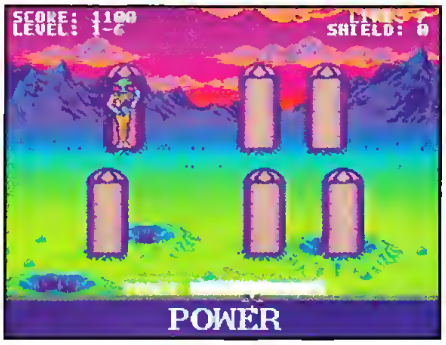
EG recently received the Menacer light gun for the Sega Genesis, and the accompanying game. The gun itself is not a bad peripheral, and could show promise if some good software is released for it. Already there is a version of **Terminator 2: The Arcade Game** coming from Flying Edge, and Sega assures us that there are more games in development. The following review is *only* for the cartridge that comes with the Menacer, and not for the peripheral itself. Each game is briefly described, with an individual score.

1) Pest Control
This takes a disgusting idea and turns it into an amusing game. There is a pizza in the middle of the screen, and the point is to keep the roaches from completely devouring it (what is the use in saving something that roaches have been walking on? But I digress.). To make things a little more difficult, only a small circle, controlled by where you point your gun, is visible, so you can't see where the bugs are all the time (the screen can be lit briefly to get your bearings). The higher the level, the more and faster the bugs. It's probably the most addictive game here. **Overall, 60%**

2) Space Station Defender
Capsules appear, and when they open there is an alien inside with a gun. Each level, there are more capsules added. They always open in the order they appear, turning this into a game of memorization. The weakest offering of the bunch. **Overall, 38%**

3) Ready, Aim, Tomatoes!
Staring Toe Jam and Earl, this game supports the best graphics of any of the six. Throw (shoot) tomatoes at everything, before they tomato you. While being one of the better games, it still suffers from the same repetition. **Overall 57%**

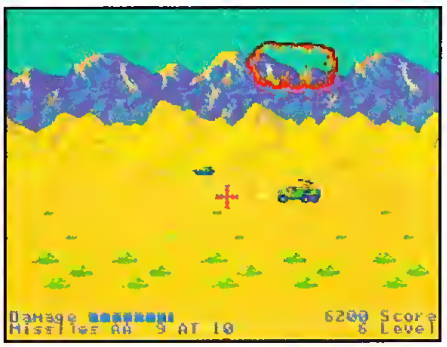
Pest Control



Space Station Defender

Ready, Aim, Tomatoes!

Whack Ball



Front Line

Rockman's Zone

4) Whackball
This is the game that would be **Arkanoid**. Nothing to shoot here, just a round paddle to guide a ball around the screen, changing the color of the blocks. Actually, this is one of the more solid games; it just seems outdated. It could have used a smaller ball and paddle and more bricks. **Overall 52%**

5) Front Line
It pains me to say it, but **Operation Wolf** on the 8-Bit Nintendo was a better game. With a war theme, the player shoots at tanks, jeeps, planes and helicopters. One level is mostly undistinguishable from the next. The enemies don't even fight back well. A severe disappointment. **Overall 39%**

6) Rockman's Zone
Hogan's Alley wanna-be. Looks like it was done in one day. 'Nuff said. **Overall 42%**

Companies must learn that six bad games does not equal one good one. Great Menacer games will be needed to make up for the pack-in.

— Marc Camron

RATING	
Complexity	Easy
Graphics	35%
Sound	41%
Playability	48%
OVERALL	**48%**

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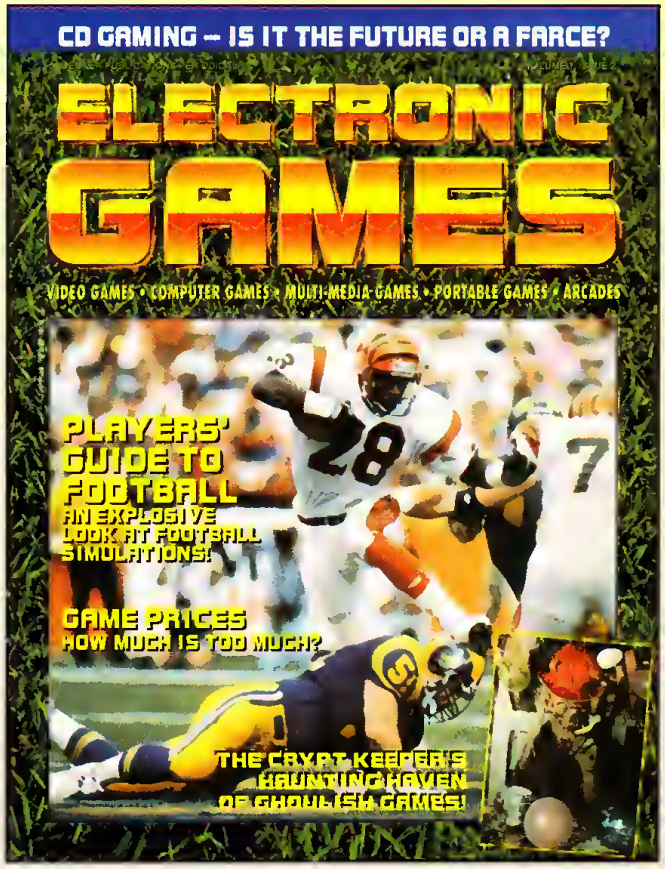

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SOFTWARE GALLERY

Master the Markets

Compton New Media
MS-DOS
1-2 players

No armchair financier can afford to be without this exceptional three-pack. The user invests in the stock market in **Millionaire II**, buys and sells real estate in **Baron**, and speculates on commodities in **Tycoon**.

These three simulations, originally published by Blue Chip Software, have strictly utilitarian graphics. Don't expect anything but charts and graphs. You want sound? Buy the new REM album.

What **Millionaire II**, **Baron**, and **Tycoon** deliver are painstakingly detailed replicas of real-world situations. These games are too complicated and take too long for the casual gamer, but they are still irresistible to those who want an uncompromising brain-game challenge.

Millionaire II turns one or two players into stock traders. The disk maintains a record of past performance, so there can be many saved games, but only two can play simultaneously.

Each turn represents a week. The simulation begins in the fourteenth week of a 91-week campaign, which gives the user some recent history that can be used to divine trends and chart the ebb and flow of the market.

The difficulty level increases as the player accumulates a higher net worth. As a Novice, the player can only buy and sell stocks, but by the time he or she becomes a Broker, the possibilities expand to include put and call options and margin buying. Although this is a complex program, it feeds its information to the user in easily digestible bits.

Can you make a million dollars in 60 months of real estate trading?

That's the object in **Baron.** The solitaire gamer reads the on-screen newspaper, analyzes mortgage rate trends, studies the real estate market in various parts of the country, and conducts real estate transactions.

As with **Millionaire II**, **Baron** gives the player more financial rope to hang himself as net worth climbs. The complexity difference between "Novice" and "Broker" is minimal, however, so it's best to start play with a fairly thorough knowledge of the rules.

The prospective Baron invests in three types of property: residential, business, and land. Investments are made in one of five areas of the U.S.: California, Florida, Kansas, New York, and Texas.

Few players, or real-life real estate speculators for that matter, would be up to managing a more far-flung portfolio.

Tycoon completes the trilogy. It presents the scariest investment market of all: the rollercoaster world of hog bellies and gold ingots.

The ascending difficulty system works in **Tycoon** even better than in **Millionaire II.** It forces the Novice to specialize in a handful of commodities, but permits the successful Broker to buy and sell metals and various currencies, too.

It's too bad the three games don't link in any way. Perhaps an overhaul that also spruces up the graphics should be considered for multimedia.

It takes a genuine interest in the subjects to make these games compelling entertainment. The user interface is not exactly state-of-the-art. Lack of audiovisual effects and the archaic key-entry order system won't help **Master the Markets** become a popular best-seller. However, those who want wheeler-dealer action without risking their bank accounts will love this three-title parlay.

— Arnie Katz

RATING	
Complexity	Hard
Graphics	40%
Sound	N/A
Playability	40%
OVERALL	79%

Gobliiins

Coktel Vision
MS-DOS
1 Player

The King is crackers. Nuts. Bonkers. Totally out of it. It's up to three winsome, if inexperienced, Gobliiins to find the wizard who can return him to normal.

That's the idea that drives this puzzle-based adventure from Coktel Vision. However, it doesn't begin to suggest how bloody difficult this game actually is. Every screen is constructed as a puzzle, which must be solved using the trio of aforementioned Gobliiins, each of whom is gifted with a particular skill. The idea is to use the right Gobliiin, armed with the right object(s), at the right time and in the right place... *Ri-i-i-ight.*

Bobo is the fighter of the group, a muscle-headed goof who is useful purely for his power. Hooter is an enthusiastic magician, whose ability to throw spells from a distance makes him invaluable to the trio. Unfortunately, the spells don't always go exactly as planned. Finally, we have Dwayne, the technician, a natural at the appropriate use of objects uncov-

Gobliiins is filled with ammusing cartoon style graphics and sound.

ered along the way. Dwayne, however, is no workhorse and can only carry one item at a time. Even worse, every wrong move costs precious life energy. Every time characters stumble, get scared, misuse an object, etc., energy is drained from them. When all the energy is gone, the game is over. The Gobliiins are also forced to start a puzzle over again from the beginning after certain blunders.

Gobliiins is a charming, if infuriating, European creation. Designed by Pierre Gilhodes and Muriel Tramis and programmed by M.D.O., the American rights to the game were acquired by Sierra, which produced the excellent and thorough documentation and memorable cover art. The graphics are simultaneously attractive and whimsical, making excellent use of VGA color selection. The sound and music is compatible with most major sound boards.

If brain-teasing puzzles make your pulse pound, this game is great. The overall challenge is extremely high, and you feel great once you conquer a puzzle. If, however, users are generally frustrated by brain teasers, they would be advised to avoid **Gobliiins** altogether and save themselves some hair, which would otherwise be pulled out by the handful.

— Bill Kunkel

RATING	
Complexity	Hard
Graphics	85%
Sound	40%
Playability	90%
OVERALL	88%

Darklands

MicroProse
Designed by MPS Labs
MS-DOS
1 Player

Talk about an ambitious project! **Darklands**, a hyper-realistic role-playing game set in the Black Forest of Medieval Germany, features more plot detail, character development and scope than ever before captured by the electronic gaming medium.

Even the more overtly fantastic elements are portrayed with teeth-clenching realism. The design plays by the rules of the period in which it takes place. Virtually every member of 15th century Germanic society believed in monsters and magic, for example, and the game plays along with that conceptualization. But the real monsters here are mostly human: hypocritical zealots, church politicians and robber-knights who will make the player's skin crawl as surely as the ugliest ogre.

A party of four characters, either player or game-generated, journeys across the so-called Holy Roman Empire, using the currency and facing the dangers unique to that time and place. History tells us that the Holy Roman Empire, or Greater Germany, was ruled by a series of weak emperors, with power falling into the hands of local warlords, princes at eternal odds with one another. With no central government, travel was an uncertain enterprise at best, and **Darklands** reflects this as the user and his party visit over 90 cities as well as countless castle strongholds, monasteries and tiny hamlets.

The interface is quite innovative, allowing users unprecedented intimacy with their characters. The game begins, like virtually every role-playing adventure in history, at an inn. This default location, used only as a gathering and resting point in previous RPGs, now opens up a wonderful range of possibilities. Taking

Darklands is set in Medieval Germany and follows its history.

up residence, for example, not only allows the characters' wounds to heal, it permits the player to set up a daily regimen for each character, which includes everything from prayer to alchemy. Both religion and pseudo-sciences, especially alchemy, were focal points of this environment and they are given appropriate prominence in **Darklands**. Alchemy, or the making of potions, is detailed right down to the process of mixing the ingredients.

Combat is perhaps the most stunningly original element in this game. The combat location is reproduced on screen in realistic, three dimensional perspective, seen from an angled, overhead view. Characters are selected and given their fighting orders during a preliminary pause phase. Once orders are assigned and targets selected, the game can be toggled into a real-time action mode, where the battle can be observed in

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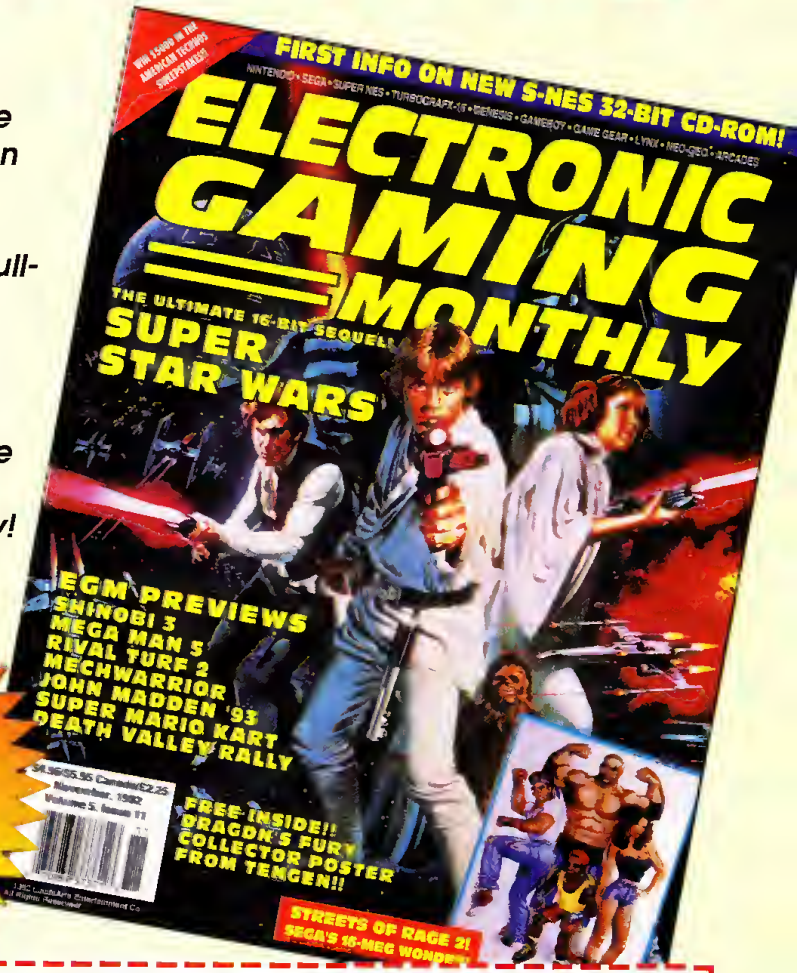

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SOFTWARE GRLLERY

amazingly brilliant detail. The graphics are breathtaking, with a watercolored look that reproduces historical images as flesh and blood characters. Every shadow, every subtle gradation of color has been burnished to perfection.

The presentation includes cut scenes, map views, and the previously mentioned combat display. A vertical strip on the left contains character descriptions for all four adventurers. These boxes have the player's name, a battle illustration and three ratings: Endurance, Strength and Divine Favor.

Obviously, **Darklands** is too big a bite for some players to swallow. Its incredible realism and detail may overwhelm them. The game may also prove to be too much of a mouthful for some computer systems, comprising an incredible *ten* 3.5" High Density disks. Two MB RAM are required, as are VGA graphics, a hard drive (or were you planning on hand-swapping those ten disks?), DOS 5.0 and a mouse.

Role-playing mavens are in for the thrill of their gaming lives. Once a real, hard-core RPG fan sets off into the **Darklands**, he may never want to return.

— Bill Kunkel

RATING	
Complexity	Hard
Graphics	85%
Sound	90%
Playability	85%
OVERALL	90%

Theatre of War

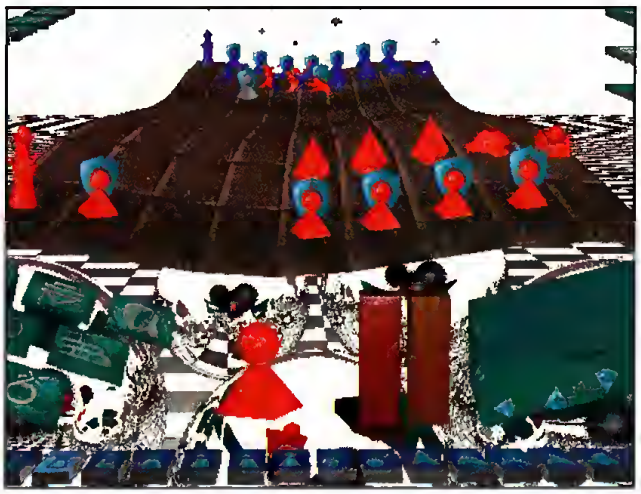
Three Sixty, Inc.
Designed by: Rick Banks and Paul Butler
MS-DOS
1-2 players

Although marketed as the first Super VGA wargame, the true selling point of **Theatre of War** is innovative and addictive game play. Despite any preconceptions based upon the title, the game is an abstract, real time strategy and conquest game that blends elements of chess and capture the flag. All action occurs on variable sized boards, which can be up to 50 x 50 crystal tiles. Individual tiles have unique properties to influence movement and combat for different warriors and may, in turn, have those properties altered by other warriors. The resultant affect is a dynamic, fluid battlefield that retains high replay value.

Theatre of War begins with the selection of a warrior set: Medieval, The Great War and Contemporary. Each set offers unique characteristics for movement, combat and ancillary functions, providing much more than simple aesthetic enhancement to the game. Warriors are stylized representations of swordsmen, gatling guns, stealth bombers and the like, with power bars for strength and health points. Strength is used for moving, fighting and other actions. Health decreases during combat and the piece is eliminated when the power bar empties. Each warrior set comes with a selection of scenarios and boards, ten each for the Medieval and Great War sets, fifteen for the contemporary warriors. The ultimate objective of all scenarios is the destruction of the senior enemy warrior.

Unlike traditional board games, the warriors do not have specific moves, but rather actions the player can select for them to perform. If ordered from one point to another, pieces choose their own paths to get there. As an example of other actions, the chariot piece can be ordered to move, seek the enemy and attack the first one it finds, patrol a given section of the board, recover strength or assassinate the enemy Emperor. Generally, pieces must occupy the same square to engage in combat, but some pieces are capable of ranged attacks, such as the catapult, cannon, gatling gun etc.. The latter attacks three squares at once, albeit with considerably less force that the others can apply to a single square. Their prime advantage is in supporting several ground attacks simultaneously.

The game is played from several view points, depending on player preference. Perspective is the main view point, a three-dimensional look across the battlefield from behind the currently selected piece. The overhead view gives the player a zooming effect on the playing field, selecting from one square to the entire board. The third view is the status screen, which provides players an instant assessment of all warriors, friendly or opponents. Throughout, an interactive soundtrack provides an upbeat accompaniment when the player is doing well or a subdued ominous undertone when things are going poorly.



The quality of the computer opponent depends on the selected scenario, with the first in each warrior set acting as a passive opponent to allow the player to become familiar with how each piece functions. The computer does possess a decided speed advantage, moving many pieces faster than the player can point and click around the board. Two human players can compete using a timer for turns on the same computer or use a much better option: a serial or modem connection.

Theatre of War may not provide gaming with the equivalent contribution that Shakespeare gave dramatics, but it is not a bit player either.

— Ed Dille

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	82%
Sound	85%
Playability	83%
OVERALL	83%

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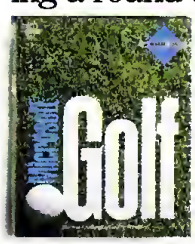

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Realms

Virgin Games
Designed by: Steve Turner
MS-DOS, Amiga, Atari ST
1 Player

Realms, an English-produced game from Graftgold Creative Software, is a "god game" simulation (similar to Bullfrog's **Populous** or Sid Meier's **Civilization**) in a fully-functional fantasy setting. **Realms'** goal is the total conquest of any one of the ten separate worlds.

Strategy is the key to those willing to enter the world of Realms.

The characters displayed on the playing field screen represent individual armies of up to 1,000 soldiers each. These can be any of the six races of Amazons, Dwarves, Orcs, Elves, Barbarians, and Vikings. Armies are either cavalry or infantry, equipped with three levels of armor, missile weapons, and melee weapons. Armies replace lost troops, and maintain better morale when paid well, either from looting cities or by the army itself, for services rendered.

When two armies meet, a tactical battle screen reminiscent of Microprose' **Samurai** replaces the playing field. The characters now shown represent 100 men each, grouped under a single army flag. Multiple armies battle real-time on this square, overhead, oblique-view battle screen, while the computer-general gives movement, formation, facing, and missile fire orders to each army. This battlefield is an easy-to-use and effective representation of tactical combat, especially with the mouse control.

Like **Civilization**, **Realms** is not simply a war game. If the member cities are healthy and prosperous while enemy cities remain under poor conditions, new cities can and will join the confederation without being conquered.

Walls discourage looters. Cultivated land and city building promotes population growth. Grain in storage discourages disease and starvation. Opposing armies can lay siege to cities, and require the inhabitants to live on stored grain, preventing them from farming until allied armies rescue them, or the city surrenders. If a city surrenders, the conquering army can loot in an orderly manner, burn the city to the ground, or annex the city. As the ruler of the realm, the player must control the health, food supplies, taxes, population, and protection of the cities.

Realms' art is more dark than colorful; its palette is in shades of blues and grays, with some other primary colors thrown in. The typically English animation and art gives the illusion of higher resolution graphics. Jason Page's music and sound effects create an atmosphere appropriate for the unfolding of events. The IBM version disk utilities allow for saving as many games as the hard disk can hold, and support pause, load, and exit. Many commands have hot key equivalents, which allows for some use of the left hand if mouse-play is selected. Keyboard and joystick play is awkward, since there is a need for precise pointing in controlling the armies.

Realms is not as complex and involved as **Civilization**, although combat is more difficult than it needs to be, and a game can take hours to play to reach a conclusion. In spite of its problems, **Realms** is an enjoyable, addicting game that will rivet the player to the computer monitor for hours and hours of enjoyable mayhem. Check it out if you are looking for more than just a typical war game.

— Alfred Giovetti

RATING	
Complexity	Hard
Graphics	81%
Sound	81%
Playability	88%
OVERALL	83%

Cruise for a Corpse

U.S. Gold
Designed by: Delphine Software
MS-DOS
1 player

U.S. Gold's **Cruise for a Corpse** casts the player as Inspector Raoul Dusentier of the Paris police force in 1927. Local millionaire Niklos Karaboudjan invites the gamer and six other guests to join him and his family for a spring cruise on his private yacht. As usually happens on guest cruises with inspectors aboard, somebody ends up dead: in this case, it's Niklos himself, lying face down in his study with a knife in his back. As the only representative of law and order on the ship, it's up to the gamer to find the killer.

Cruise is definitely not an original concept. Players of games such as Activision's **Murder on the Mississippi** and Tiger Media's **Case of the Cautious Condor** will recognize the murder-on-a-cruise ploy (although the latter game actually takes place on an airplane). One wonders why the designers couldn't think of a more original and interesting way to bring together a group of people. Still, the game proves to be a fairly solid, if not particularly innovative, mystery.

As in many of the new adventure and role-playing games, the point-and-click interface is the game's best feature. If the player clicks on an object, a list of verbs pops on screen; selecting one performs that action on the object. This makes the interface very easy to learn (no need to memorize what different icons do), and experienced players may not need to read the instructions. The interface is marred, however, by the seemingly arbitrary choice of verbs for different objects. For example, the detective may be able to only Examine a pile of laundry on one side of the room, but both Examine and Search another pile in the same room. Also, the various verbs sometimes overlap, giving different choices with the same effect: "Examine" and "Observe" give basically the same information.

Most fact finding takes place in discussions with the other guests. Dialogue is handled in a similar way to object manipulation, with a list of subjects to discuss. After selecting one, another list shows which specific topics can be discussed with the other person. This works as an efficient way to gather information, but the characters show little real personality: even after accusations of cheating on their spouses, plotting the murder, and other such

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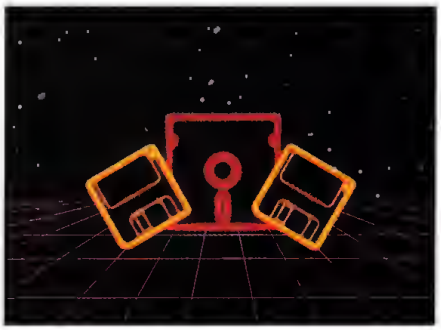


SOFTWRRE GRLLERY

activities, the guests are still happy to talk. This lack of short-term memory has been alleviated in other games of this type in recent years, and it's disappointing to see it present in a new release.

The puzzles are often overly frustrating. The plot only progresses to its next point after a certain object or fact is discovered, and there is sometimes absolutely no indication as to what that might be. This forces a search of every room on the ship (even places that were searched before; objects tend to appear at random) and discussions with every person on the ship, something which quickly becomes tiresome.

The graphics appear to be ported from the Amiga & Atari ST versions of the game, and are a bit below average in the regular game screens. However, the non-interactive and dialogue sequences are

The scenes in Cruise for a Corpse are nicely painted and animated.

nicely done, and work well to bring much needed atmosphere to an otherwise drab game. Sound effects are minimal, and the music gets repetitive quickly, making the moments of silence golden. Unfortunately, there is no way for the music to be turned off.

It should be noted that **Cruise** occasionally (and seemingly randomly) either locks up or dumps the player back into DOS. While it may not happen that often, players are well advised to save frequently.

Cruise for a Corpse is not a groundbreaking product by any means, but it is a fairly enjoyable detective story. More noninteractive segments would have raised the product's atmosphere level and perhaps turned it into an interesting period piece. As it stands, **Cruise** may be a good game for beginning computer sleuths, but veteran players might want to look elsewhere.

— Ed Finkler

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	62%
Sound	55%
Playability	67%
OVERALL	70%

Darwin's Dilemma: The Solution is Evolution (Version 2.0)

Inline Design
Designed by: André Ouimet
Macintosh
1 Player

Darwin is in a real dilemma. None of the creatures he is studying will evolve. All his theories could be down the drain, and he'll be the laughing stock of every scientist. What is Darwin going to do?

He's going to kick them. That's right! With the player's help, Darwin can kick the animals into action.

Darwin's Dilemma, by Inline Design, puts an interesting twist on the concept of evolution. In this strategy game, the player must move icons representing different animals horizontally and vertically, merging them with other icons to form new ones. When all the icons on one board are merged, a new creature is created, and will be used in the next level.

If this sounds confusing, don't worry about it. This is easily learned within the first five minutes of play, and if the player is still confused at that point, there's a nice online help section. This game is another in the category of "minutes to learn, years to master" type of games.

The difficulty comes in lining up the same icons. When Darwin kicks an icon, it moves across the screen. If there's not another icon to stop it, the icon wraps around, and stops in its original position (knocking Darwin over). The trick

Evolution turns into even more of a puzzle with Darwin's Dilemma.

is to have enough blockers.

The game would be impossible to solve without the teleporters. They allow the gamer to teleport an icon to any position on the board. Unfortunately, there's only a limited amount of these handy gadgets available.

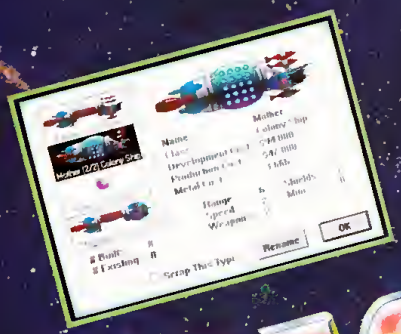
Darwin's Dilemma is certainly an original concept, and for the first three levels, the game is interesting and fun. After that, the fun takes a nose dive. All levels are basically the same. There are no interesting backgrounds, and the icons don't even animate. It also would have been nice to have reward screens between levels. After a while, a gamer feels like it's just an exercise in jumping through hoops, with not enough real entertainment value. The game does have an icon editor, but it's hard to use, and the average unartistic player will end up in the land of stick people. Even worse, there's only one world, and the background screens are plain white.

It is also disappointing that **Darwin** didn't include skill levels. The game gets progressively harder, and it's made more difficult by the hard-to-read instruction manual.

Perhaps the most puzzling thing about the contest is that it's not based on evolution at all; no thought was taken to base it on fact.

This might have been better were it not so plain, and if there was more variety in the play action. All in all, **Darwin's Dilemma** needs to evolve upward to become more entertaining.

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	47%
Sound	68%
Playability	65%
OVERALL	45%



- Go where no cowboy has gone before.
- No two games are exactly alike.
- Full network modem compatability.

SPACEWARD HO!

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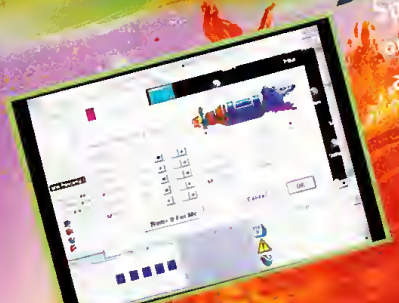
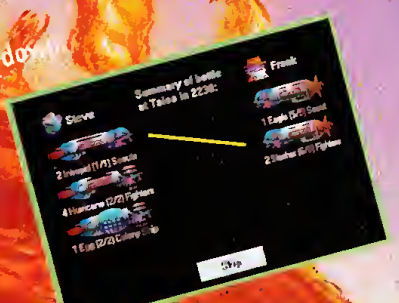
- A minute to learn, an hour to kick butt.

Spaceward Ho! is a space strategy game for the conquest of the universe. Players start out with a rather low level of technology and income with which to build ships, explore and colonize planets, and eventually rule over the universe. Spaceward Ho! is an adventure lasting many hours and days, and you will never play the same game twice. Due to the multiplayer compatability you and your friends can pit your wits head against the computer, or BOTH.

Round 'em up and head 'em out. It's time for a showdown.





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SOFTWARE GALLERY

HUNTER

Activision
Designed by: Paul Holmes
Amiga
1 Player

"The elite Hunter corps was specifically created to counter the military threat taking shape on the mainland opposite the Archipelago. The subsequent invasion of the Archipelago by the mainland armies was stopped, but not before nearly half of the islands fell under enemy control. The Hunter's task is to rid the enemy occupied islands of their captors."

— From the classified files of General Dartus, Commanding Officer, Archipelago Military HQ

Although similar in scope to MicroProse's **Flames of Freedom**, **Hunter** is a much simpler game, where the main character is viewed on-screen as the 3D landscape scrolls around him. This external view provides a great open-air feeling to the game, even when aboard one of the 17 different modes of transportation. The sheer number and variety of vehicles is quite entertaining in itself. From simple machines to massive tanks and nimble helicopters, any type of transport the Hunter may need can be found lurking somewhere.

There are three modes of play available at startup: Missions, Action and Hunter. In Missions play, Hunter is given an objective and a deadline. He must destroy the target and return to base within the allotted time, whereupon he is assigned a new objective and deadline. These are designed as quick commando raids and let the player become familiar with the basic elements of the game.

'Action' serves as a single long-range mission with multiple objectives and a generous eight-day time limit. Here, the player learns the importance of fuel economy and route planning. Exceeding the time limit alone does not end the game. Hunter is free to wander around as long as he likes, flying, windsurfing, blowing stuff up; but when he finally decides to return to base, he gets the boot.

'Hunter' is the main game and has a sole objective - collect one enemy general's head. Obviously, it's not as simple as it sounds. The player gets bounced all over the map gathering information, equipment and objects requested by other characters before they'll cooperate. Typically, the player may need to drive to a waiting helicopter, fly to an island where he can pilot a boat, take it to a spot outside of anti-ship missile range, swim to shore, walk to a building, trade with a character and then destroy the ASM battery before moving on to the next objective. All character and vehicle movement is controlled by joystick. Moving a mouse cursor above the control panel pops up the equipment table for easy access, although some key presses allow shortcuts to activation. A text box below the panel displays dialogue, warnings and news flashes like, "You have died."

All in all, **Hunter** is an immensely absorbing game, filled with nice touches. All objects are rendered in 3D polygons and, while not very detailed, look absolutely right. Waves lap at the shore and gulls cry overhead; day turns into night and flares illuminate the landscape with an artificial glow. It's a game that can be played as enjoyably in ten minutes as in ten hours.

— Scott Wolf

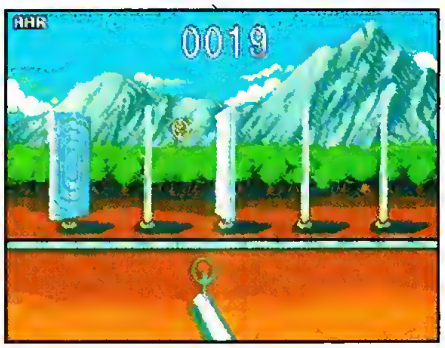
RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	83%
Sound	64%
Playability	96%
OVERALL	93%

International Sports Challenge

Empire Simulations
Designed by: M.J. Landreth
MS-DOS
1-4 players

Most strategy sports games tend to focus on a single game, such as baseball or golf, while those with multiple sports usually stress action. Empire Simulations includes both elements in their **International Sports Challenge (ISC)**. Though marathon running, diving, show jumping, swimming, cycling and shooting are not normally associated together, they are all part of the Olympics and make an interesting combination. Taking on the entire group provides a kind of mini-decathlon. One to four different human players can compete, though each plays alone, since the game provides no head-to-head competition.

The marathon (perhaps the most difficult event to master) opens the challenge. The strategic emphasis is on such elements as proper pacing, what refreshment to take at the next rest stand, and



Shooting is one of the better events in International Sports Challenge.

what effect the weather will have on the run. Runners are seen in side-perspective, though an overall course map and other control screens are available.

Diving is closer to the traditional olympic simulations. The player must move the controls in a specific manner based on the dive chosen. The closer the movement is to the optimum, the more points the dive is worth. The on-screen diver is detailed in side-perspective, and the backgrounds provide a good setting.

Show jumping requires the player to ride through the multiple jumps of the course. While the overall layout of the jumps is fixed, their exact sequence can vary, adding a little uncertainty to the competition. Three dimensional graphics are used, but they seem rather plain and lack some of the additional pizazz found in other 3-D offerings.

Cycling's 3-D engine is even more visually sparse. The goal is to finish the required number of laps in the lowest time. Though in real life one rider can catch up to a competitor and end the race early, the computer seems to speed up enough to prevent this in the game. This is a slight letdown for the competitive gamer.

The swimming event features four different strokes and pits the player in direct competition with the computer. Each stroke has its own timing and rhythm, requiring a different approach for

the optimal speed. A side view similar to that used in the marathon and diving events is used.

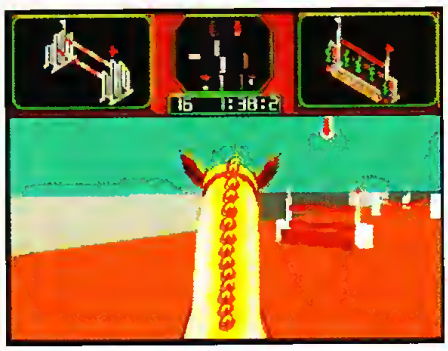
In shooting, the player either fires at quickly appearing and disappearing targets, or at clay pigeons shot into the air. Here, the graphics have a three-dimensional feel to them, and are better than other such events, though the background is stationary.

Each event has a preferred controller, usually either the mouse or a joystick, with the keyboard filling in for either one. In rapid fire events, it is sometimes hard to get the mouse across the screen, though this is more a problem of most IBM-compatible mice than a fault of the game.

The worst part of **ISC** is learning how the controls work. The manual does include basic instructions, but these are too sparse and require much experimentation to understand. While it is reasonable for a game to require some time to master, the controls should either be obvious or at least well documented.

The marathon provides the largest sensation of helplessness. Though the manual talks about the strategic elements required to perform well, it never gives much detail about how these work in practice. The other five events are played inbetween segments of the run, and it is very common to return from a successful event, only to find that one or more of the human players has dropped out. Though this is probably due to exhaustion, as no clear indication is given.

ISC falls short of its potential. Some



Show jumping, though first person, still feels fairly two-dimentional.

of the graphics are nice, but none really stand out, and the overall feeling is rather humdrum. None of the events can be directly played against a human opponent, another area where it could have redeemed itself. Other olympic collections, such as Epyx's **Games** series, are just as good or better, despite being several years older.

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	70%
Sound	80%
Playability	40%
OVERALL	50%

— R. Bradley Andrews

The Lord of the Rings, Vol. II: The Two Towers

Interplay
Designed by: Bennie, Boucher, Greenwood, Terra & Varney
MS-DOS
1 Player

Tolkien's view of Middle-Earth has dominated our images of magical kingdoms, but there's only been one successful attempt to literally recreate the epic on disk. Interplay hasn't so much been inspired by it, but has followed it like a map in their outstanding interactive adventure.

The Two Towers takes up where **Vol. I** ended. A synopsis of what occurred before is told in text against paintings of the incidents described. It summarizes the plot through the dissolution of the Fellowship.

Play begins with Legolas, Gimli and Aragorn in battle with orcs, then continues relentlessly in the quest. Side trips have their own goals, but the path parallels the tale. While this heroic threesome live through the great events that rip the land in the second volume of the trilogy, Merry and Pippin continue on their own time line, and the Ringbearer and Companion trudge along their tormented trail in their quest for the one all-powerful ring. Play jumps back and forth between the groups throughout the game, switching when certain tasks by the current

The Two Towers remains faithful to the world created by J.R.R. Tolkien.

group under control are completed.

The interface is a logical display of pictorial icons. Choices are attack, view, get, use, skill (such as climbing, lock picking, etc.), magic, recruit, dismiss, talk, and leader (to select the appropriate front-man). A handy automapping

The battle scenes utilize the familiar overhead perspective.

feature allows the player to relax and let the computer keep track of places that have been visited.

The talk icon produces the most disappointing part of the game. The parser is very limited, and it's basically a guess as to what word or name to input. This can become rather annoying and makes the game move slower.

Most of the game is seen from an angled overhead perspective, guided by an on-screen arrow to move travelers across the terrain. Atmospheric paintings spark key encounters, and clever animations show up during many scenes. Combat is simple. Each party member's face is shown with his available options. The effortless play mechanic is complemented by a stirring musical score by Charles Deenan.

The Two Towers falls short of actually putting the player into the Tolkien world. Although spiritually faithful to the masterwork, the overhead perspective is a cold, impersonal view that doesn't stir the senses or thrill the player. The chill of the Ring Wraiths, the stench of the orcs, the weight of the Ring - these are missing. Yet, the story is so carefully recreated, no true Tolkien fan would want to miss it.

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	65%
Sound	80%
Playability	70%
OVERALL	75%

CD GALLERY

Spirit of Excalibur

Virgin Games
MS-DOS/CD-ROM
Synergistic Software
1 Player

CD-ROM conversions of existing PC games are probably the toughest type of CD program to evaluate. Certainly, if the original game was strong, the CD version has never been any weaker. The real question

The CD version of Spirit of Excalibur has been considerably enhanced.

is: how much does the CD version *add* to the original? In a few rare cases, the CD version is a revelation, so good that even owners of the original version may want to spend the bucks to experience it. In too many other conversions, however, the CD version adds virtually nothing to the original; the publishers are content to simply transfer the program to a new medium.

Virgin Games' **Spirit of Excalibur** for CD-ROM is, happily, much closer to the first example than the second. There is a nice CD soundtrack with text replaced by professional voice-overs, though captions still appear frequently on-screen. The major problem is that the animation in the original was less than eye-popping, and nothing is done to improve it here. The background graphics are rather attractive, but the foreground characters are stiff and look unrealistic whenever they move. The animation, in fact, is weak even in the introductory sequence during which an armored arm rises from the lake bearing the fabled sword in hand. The waters do not part realistically, but rather a seam appears to open in the lake from which the sword rises. This is not a good portent, but it is, alas, an accurate one.

The game is set in 539 AD. King Arthur is dead, having been slain at Camlann, and Camelot is about to crumble. The player is cast as Crown Regent Lord Constantine, and as the game begins, he is in York. The first matter of business is to travel to Camelot in order to take control of the wobbling government there. Unfortunately, Constantine does not have Arthur's greatest resource at his command: the Knights of the Round Table. Lancelot has gone into hiding and has taken the rest of the remaining Round Table gang with him. What's worse, most of the local power brokers do not acknowledge the succession, and the ever-unpopular Mordred (Arthur's illegitimate son) while dead, has left two sons of his own, Melehan and Morgolon, to continue in the evil family tradition. The dawn of the Dark Ages is upon us and it is up to the player, as Constantine, to preserve the Arthurian dream of Camelot - a tremendous task indeed!

The game uses a Map Level for strategic interaction and a Scene Level for individual confrontations, including combat. Icons as well as keystrokes are employed to give commands.

The actors used to recreate the characters' voices do an excellent job and the soundtrack is appropriately grand and Arthurian. In other words, if you own a CD drive and enjoy adventures in this style and don't yet possess this title, the CD-ROM version is certainly superior to the original. **Spirit of Excalibur** is not at the pinnacle of CD-ROM games, but it gives promise for the future.

— Bill Kunkel

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	85%
Sound	80%
Playability	85%
OVERALL	85%

Night Trap

Sega
Sega CD
1 Player

Sega finally has its CD player ready for release, and one of the initial releases for it is the game **Night Trap**.

This game comes as somwhat a surprise. There was very little advance press available on this title and no pictures were released before the game was shown.

The story in **Night Trap** should be a familiar one to any who have stayed up too late at night, watching bad sci-fi flicks on the late show. It seems that alien-vampires have landed in the small community of

Alien bloodsuckers are everywhere! Spring the traps as fast as possible.

Lakeshore, and are kidnapping the locals for who-knows what kind of kinky alien activities. It seems that the last place any of these people were seen was at the Martin estate. Of course Mr. and Mrs. Martin aren't going to let this spoil their happy, yuppie lives. Instead, they are going away for the weekend, and leaving their kids to tend to the house. To make matters all the worse, their daughter has invited some friends (victims) over for a slumber party. All the better for the aliens to clean up.

Now, it wouldn't be very nice to leave all of those (as the manual describes them, "beautiful females between the ages of 16 and 19") guests unprotected, would it? That is where the player comes in.

It seems that the Martins, for some reason, have their house set up like a fortress. There are surviellance cameras in eight locations, and trap-doors all over the place. Your organization, S.C.A.T. (Sega Control Attack Team), has infiltrated the house, and installed an override on the cameras and traps. The player now have the ability to monitor the house and capture the aliens. There are, however, a few sticky points.

In order to spring the traps, the right access color is needed. This color can be changed at any time, and it is important to monitor the Martins very carefully for these changes. The other problem is the speed in which things happen. It is necessary to jump from room to room at a constant pace, in order to insure that the number of aliens don't get out of hand. Capture the aliens, save the co-eds, and make S.C.A.T. proud.

Night Trap is different for several reasons. First, the entire game is digitized. All of the action from start to finish is accomplished through full motion video. Real actors, actresses, and settings were used and the video is of very high quality. It is nowhere near as choppy as previous attempts such as **Sherlock Holmes** for the TG-CD.

Also, all of the events take place in real time. There are things going on all over the house simultaneously, making it necessary to play the game through several times to make note of all the events. It is suggested that players take extensive notes as to what is going on where and at what time, so that the game can be played through later, hopping from room to room, trapping the bad guys.

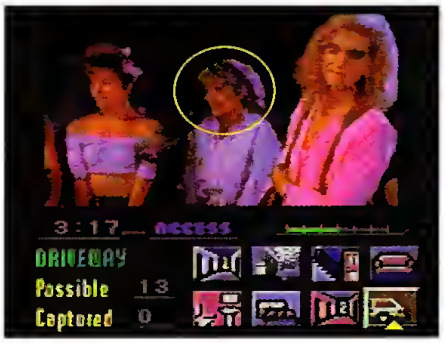
The game has an excellent, if somewhat warped, sense of humor and the whole thing is played out like the "B" movie that it is.

The biggest flaw in this game is that it was programmed for males. The sight of nubile, young women running around in various states of undress (never nude) will most likely put-off many of the female players. Still, the story holds up, and if given a chance, should ammuse anyway.

The graphics and sounds are wonderful, and a great departure from the cartoony games that seem to be the norm. It's fun to play a game using real actors and actresses as characters, and it is especially nice to see Dana Plato, the star of the game, getting work on the right side of the law.

The game control is a little stiff, and springing the traps takes precise timing, and a little getting used to.

It is obvious that a lot of time and effort went into making this game. The way that the action moves is amazing. One time you will be watching things happen in the kitchen, and the next time you play, if you go to the driveway, different events will be occurring. There is so much that the game takes up two CDs!



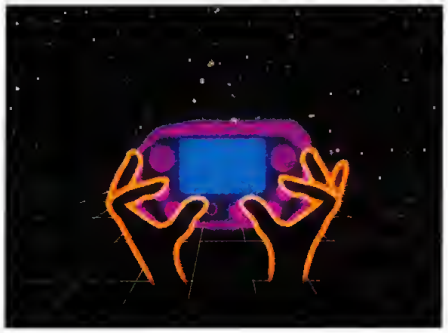
Dana Plato, star of stage, screen, television and the nightly news.

This is an outstanding early effort from Sega, and if this is an indication of the direction of their CD-ROM, it should be a big success.

Night Trap is a must-have for owners of the Sega CD. A triumph for all lovers of "B" movies.

— Marc Camron

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	95%
Sound	92%
Playability	86%
OVERALL	89%



PORTABLE PLAYTIME

Batman Returns

Sega
Game Gear
1 Player

Out of the darkness comes a creature made from terror, so frightening that no one dares to halt its arrival. It travels swiftly, destroying everything in its path. Who would have thought that this could happen?

Of course, I am talking about *Batman Returns*, this summer's sequel to the mega-hit *Batman*. After the movie comes one of the inevitable video game follow-ups, now starting to hit the stores.

Batman Returns, for Game Gear, follows the same story as the movie. It features the Penguin, the Catwoman, and lots of fighting. The gamer gets to punch out the bad guys, throw batarangs, and fight the bosses at the end of the levels. Hopefully, Batman can restore peace and tranquility to Gotham. Next time, maybe he should try to find a more stable woman to fall in love with.

Okay, there weren't bosses at the end of the levels in the movie, but the basic idea remains intact. For a Game Gear cart, this side-scroller is not bad. As each level starts, the player is given two choices of routes to travel. These are similar, but the extra choices add to the life expectancy of this game. At the end of each level there is a boss to beat, and then the gamer must again choose his path. The gamer must fight through five levels and face off with the Penguin for the final battle.

The graphics and sound are good for a handheld cart. There could have been a bit more variety with the levels, though. The ability to use the batarang and rope to swing from buildings and pull up onto ledges is cool, even if it does make Batman look a little like Spiderman.

Overall, this version of Batman is well done and stays true to the movie. A good addition to the Game Gear library.

— Marc Camron

RATING	
Complexity	Average
Graphics	76%
Sound	76%
Playability	76%
OVERALL	77%

Galaga '91

Namcot
Game Gear
1 Player

Rediscovering forgotten classics is becoming hip. With the limited visual horizons provided by handheld systems, game producers are on the lookout for software ideas with more play value and less visual complexity.

Allow your ship to get hijacked, and rescue it later for double firepower.

When **Galaga** first appeared in arcades during the second wave of **Space Invaders** coin-ops, it was pretty darn impressive. It was largely a hybrid of Namco's two earlier hits, **Space Invaders** and **Galaxian**, more closely resembling the latter. The former was the game which introduced those thump-thump-thumping aliens to arcades, while the latter allowed those invading space monsters to actually take wing, swooping back and forth on their way downscreen, dropping bombs as they flew.

Galaga's major innovation was the inclusion of cut scenes involving space ships and tractor beams, in addition to the most challenging elements from the first two games. **Galaga '91**, the neat neoclassic Namcot conversion for the Game Gear, includes some vertical scrolling sequences, with the player forced to pilot a horizontally steerable spaceship through twisting caverns while

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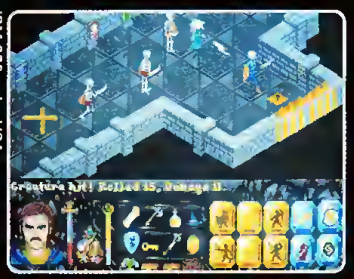

Overhead view smoothly scrolls as you explore 40 levels of dangerous dungeons and mazes.

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PORTABLE PLAYTIME

firing upon squads of winged, bomb-dropping aliens. It also retains the flavor of the original with admirable fidelity.

The initial screen starts out totally free of all aliens. Before very long, however, several have appeared onscreen, roosting like bats at the top of the playfield. The invaders don't remain dormant very long, and once they take flight, things get tricky. The invaders take a downward, pendulum-like course, carpet bombing the bottom of the screen, until they disappear off the lower end of the playfield,

only to soon reappear at the top. Then still more aliens swoop onscreen, until just staying alive becomes problematic, much less destroying the enemy.

The invaders span an impressive spectrum of winged lifeforms, from bugs to birds with numerous stops along the way. There are ugly, bat-like creatures; fat, deadly looking mutant houseflies and what appear to be space sparrows among the gauntlet of alien enemies faced by the gamer. They, along with the other lifeforms, provide an intense challenge for the portable scene.

This can really put the entire electronic gaming hobby into perspective. It can be very healthy for players to periodically engage in contests that can't be conquered and don't involve side-scrolling jumping-and-shooting as the primary play mechanic.

— Bill Kunkel

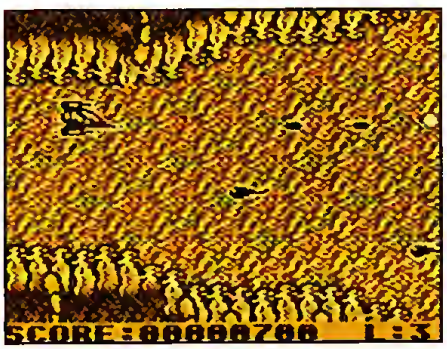
RATING	
Complexity	Easy
Graphics	80%
Sound	80%
Playability	80%
OVERALL	83%

StarHawk

Accolade
Game Boy
1 Player

When **StarHawk** first arrived, it sparked a memory of a similarly named coin-op from a long time ago. The game was an early sitdown coin-op from Cinematronics, a now-defunct company. One of the first vector graphics games, it was a first-person perspective shoot-out against an assortment of *Star Wars*-inspired fighter craft. It was also one of the most electrifying games of its period, providing hours of intense challenge because of the overall speed and dexterity of the game mechanics.

Imagine the disappointment, therefore, when the Game Boy **StarHawk** turned out to be just another horizontally-scrolling, generic sci-fi shooter. As in a hundred other games exactly like it, from **Scramble** to **R-Type** and **Truxton**, players pilot a space fighter down a cavernous, side-scrolling gauntlet of enemy ships, asteroids and bug-eyed alien monsters, acquiring power-ups whenever possible. The ship is capable of vertical movement as well as limited speed-up and slow-down, but is drawn inexorably eastward by the pull of the horizontal scroll.



Fly and shoot are the only things the player really needs to know here.

Developed by NMS Software without a single original feature, there are, at least, a variety of backgrounds. The initial scenario, however, uses a background texture that makes the ship's targets almost impossible to see. Subsequent scenarios make better use of the parallax scrolling.

This is arcade *deja vu;* if you've played one sci-fi side-shooter, you've pretty much played them all. There are two difficulty levels, a continue feature, passwords for each milestone and up to five lives. The five worlds have the usual Boss monster waiting at the end of each level.

Fly through the canyons and blast the "Evil Empire" in all its guises.

The storyline has the player piloting the scout ship *StarHawk* in order to explore the "Evil Empire" headquartered on the planet Axtar, in case anybody actually cared.

Nothing special here, but it did bring back pleasant memories from a time when all action games didn't employ the same shoot-em-up style and uncreative format.

— Bill Kunkel

RATING	
Complexity	Easy
Graphics	72%
Sound	80%
Playability	75%
OVERALL	68%

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FANDOM CENTRAL

The True Spirit of Fandom

by Arnie Katz

Why become an electronic gaming fan? After all, the games are the main event, and we'll be able to buy and play them whether or not fanzines exist.

What separates the fan from the player is the desire to go beyond the gaming screen to a closer connection with the hobby. Fans want to reach out to other enthusiasts and share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions.

Fanzines are the main mechanism for achieving this. A fanzine is a relatively simple way to broadcast one's ideas far and wide. The tradezines, contributions and letters of comment the fanzine editor receives are the coin of repayment.

It is understandable that some amateur writers and editors want to advance to the professional ranks. A few, including Frank Eva and Ed Finkler, have already done so. Many more will eventually follow in their footsteps. I'd be the last one to say that isn't a worthy goal.

Dreams and goals are vital, but let's not confuse them with reality. Fanzines are strictly small-time ventures, published for the love of the hobby. They will never turn into professional magazines, no matter how much their editors desire it. Fanzines are worthwhile in and of themselves, and it's demeaning to view them as just the stepchildren of the professional publications.

A good fanzine doesn't mindlessly copy **Electronic Games** or **Electronic Gaming Monthly**. A fanzine should present a written version of the personalities of its editor and writers. The personal touch is something that fanzines have that prozines can't match. A fan-ed (fanzine editor) who puts on airs, adopts a pseudo-corporate name, and imitates the trapping of a professional magazine, is shortchanging the readers and missing the point - and the fun. All the self-important posturing in the world won't make a fanzine into a prozine.

It is a proud thing to be a fan. The best fanzines reflect this, and the others would be wise to heed the lesson and step out from behind the overblown facade and join the rest of us.

That concludes the sermon. Now let's get the dessert—this month's crop of new fanzines!

Computer Gaming Update #11
Edited by Danny Han and Terrence Yee, P.O. Box 240523, Honolulu, HI 96824-0523
Monthly, $1.95 per issue, 10 pages.

This is one of my favorite fanzines, despite occasional lapses into mock-professionalism (the full page subscription blank, $1.95 price and similar minor annoyances). Han and Yee, backed by a staff that includes neo-pro Al Giovetti, write engagingly about home computer games and really know their subject.

Computer Gaming Update is one of the most attractive fanzines you'll ever see. The text is neatly arranged, and crisp black and white photos enhance the well-written reviews.

The issue leads off with several pages of one of the best news sections in fandom, though the author should be less shy about signing his (or her) work. What makes it such absorbing reading is that it analyzes the stories. Fanzines rarely scoop **Electronic Gaming Monthly**, but the editor's interpretation is unique.

One item drew my "amen!". The writer exhorts readers to write to the prozines and ask for fanzine review columns. **EG** has one, and **CGR** plans to start one in December, but what about the other publications? Fans will only get prozine support if they make a point of telling the editors what they want.

Terrence Yee and Al Giovetti handle most of the reviewing chores this issue. Games covered include **American Gladiators, Hardball III, Thunderhawks**, and **Out of This World**. There's a numerical rating for each game, but the reviews are long enough to give a fairly clear view of each title's merits and flaws.

Computer Gaming Update is one of a handful of fanzines that concentrates on software rather than video game cartridges. Risk a couple of bucks on this one; it's guaranteed good.

Digital Press #6, #7
Edited by Joe Santulli, 29 Cupsaw Ave., Ringwood, NJ 07456-2818
Bimonthly, $1.25 per issue, 24 and 8 pages, respectively

Two issues of this fine video game fanzine are at hand. The larger one celebrates completion of a year of publication, while #7 reports the results of the **DP** scavenger hunt won by Russ Perry. Joe Santulli challenged readers to find such items as a game magazine cover dated January 1985 and a classified ad trying to sell an Atari 2600.

The usual content of **Digital Press** balances well-researched articles about old systems with news and

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FANDOM CENTRAL

reviews of 16-bit games. Joe Santulli's writing style is relaxed, personable and lucid, though the fanzine itself could use a dose of informality. The subscription ad on the inside back cover adds nothing to the 'zine and burns up a page that could have been used for something better.

My favorite piece in #6 is Santulli's study of oddball video games which includes his choices for the ten strangest titles of all time. All pieces are well-illustrated by cartoon artwork and black and white photos.

Joe Santulli's abilities as a writer and editor seem to grow with each new issue of **Digital Press.** Don't miss future ones, because I've got a strong feeling that the best is yet to come.

Zapp! #4
Edited by Scott Weller, 134 Ten Rod Rd., Exeter, RI 02822.
Quarterly, $4.75/four issues, 16 pages.

Reviews of current computer and video games are the main course in this tasty fanzine. A solid editorial, a letter column, strategy, two Craig Engler articles about virtual reality games, and a news column round out a very good issue.

Scott displays a little artistic talent with a decent cover cartoon and visually pleasing layout and graphics. Some might find the body text type a little overpowering, but fanzine editors should feel free to display their individual preference in this manner.

Scott and the other reviewers describe games well, but their analysis isn't quite as good. They tend to rate most games either very high or very low, whereas the majority of titles fall into the middle. That notwithstanding, **Zapp!** is definitely a fanzine on the rise, and one well worth a look.

Mindstorm #6
Edited by Aaron Buckner, 9474 Fallson Ct., Blue Ash, OH 45242
Frequent, $1 per issue, 24 pages.

"BNF" (Big Name Fan) means more than just someone whose name is familiar to most other fans, though that is part of it. It carries the connotation of respect and achievement. Add to the short list of electronic gaming fandom's BNFs the name of Aaron Buckner. With its sixth issue, **Mindstorm** takes its place at the apex of the hobby. This is, quite simply, the best fanzine electronic gaming has produced. It is a publication that can be spoken of in the same breath as the top titles in other fandoms (science fiction, comics, rock music, etc.).

From Joe Barbagallo's cover feature on Turbo Technologies, to the "Maelstrom" column of modern music reviews, this is a fascinating publication that blends hardcore gaming with engrossing and informative material on other interesting and relevant subjects. Aaron Buckner is not afraid to try new things, and there's no doubt that he's mastering the art of the fanzine at breathtaking speed.

News, reviews, a letter column, opinion pieces, and even an excellent serving of fanzine reviews fill most of the issue. All make stimulating reading. This is the kind of fanzine that makes its readers think while it entertains them.

For instance, "Roadside Bunnyguts" by Mike Ciletti, finds one of fandom's best humorists tackling the serious subject of fan feuds. Mike marshals his facts well and gives some intelligent insights to the reason why discussions sometimes boil over into verbal battles.

Mindstorm is #1. Send for a sample copy and find out why.

Attention fanzine editors: If you want your fanzine reviewed in **Electronic Games**, send your zine to Arnie Katz, 330 S. Decatur., Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.

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Review a game and win games in EG's monthly contest!

Each month **Electronic Games'** critics review dozens of new releases. They do a great job, but a lot of our readers are knowledgeable and perceptive about the games, too. So for the first time in any gaming magazine, we're starting a monthly contest that will let you strut your stuff. We'll pick two games each month, one computer and one video, and challenge gamers to review them. Then, in "The Jury", EG will print the best ones. If we print your review, you will win a video or computer game of your choice! (Any system except Neo Geo.)

The rules are simple:
1. All reviews must be of the nominated games.
2. Entrants can submit only one review of each game.
3. All submission become the property of **EG**.
4. Reviews should be 200 words or less, typed double-spaced.
5. The month's two best reviews (one in each division), as determined by **EG** editors, earn the writers a video or computer game of their choice. (Sorry, no Neo Geo carts.)
6. The contest is open to anyone who has not sold professionally to **EG** within the previous 12 months (exclusive of this contest).

Games for Contest #3:
Gods (video game/Genesis)
Mantis (computer game)

Deadline for this month's contest:
December 10, 1992

Send entries to:
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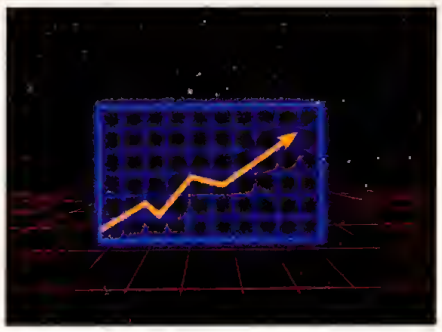


KUNKEL REPORT

Bring Me Shovelware!

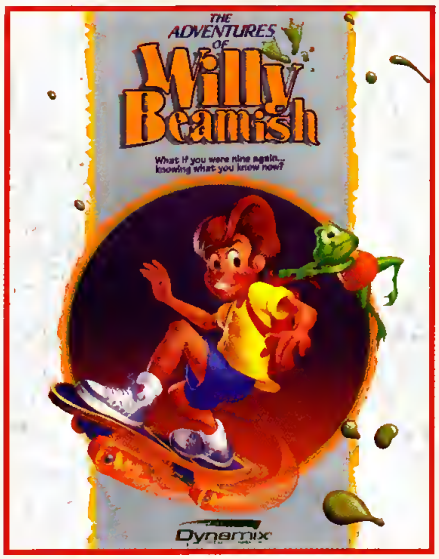
CD-ROM-type technology has been hinted at, promised, hyped, and dissected for at least a decade. Now it has done the most remarkable thing of all: it has appeared. The jury is still out on whether CD is a good or bad thing for electronic games. It is unquestionably a good thing for software publishers.

Many computer games consume so much data storage space that they use fifteen and twenty floppy discs. That's a lot of material to put in boxes already stuffed with registration cards, documentation, order forms, magazine premiums, quick-start cards, promotional googahs and the inevitable sheet of paper inscribed: "IMPORTANT: Read This or Your Computer May Explode During Installation!!"

A CD can hold 550 megabytes of data, and one or two CDs fit in a box a heck of a lot easier (not to mention weighing considerably less) than a dozen floppies. That's why computer game publishers like the medium. Here's why they don't: so far, action games simply have not translated well. The reason? It takes time for the processors to sort through all that data on the fly.

Then there's the matter of public expectations. Research & development time on many of these full-motion video CD games is not only extensive, it's *expensive* . Those visionaries who ran out and purchased CD-ROM drives have received precious little for their investment. CD conversions of pre-existing games have, by and large, offered little or nothing more than the original version with better music and, sometimes, a splashy intro. The occasional delight (like LucasArts' CD revamp of **Loom**, with full speech) seems almost a miracle. And games developed *for* CD have so far been terrible disappointments.

On the video game side, Sega is about to introduce its CD-ROM drive for the Genesis but the outlook isn't bright. Games seen so far are choppy and visually uninspiring. Nintendo seems to have trumped its chief rival with its FX chip, which includes a co-processor and remedies almost all of the SNES's deficiencies. Nintendo then informed the world it would *not* produce a CD drive for the SNES after all, implying that such a drive on a 16-bit machine is the equivalent of a hard drive on a digital watch. Instead, it will introduce a CD drive for Christmas '93 that transforms the SNES into a 32-bit machine.



The added full speech enhances the CD-ROM version of Willie Beamish.

ROM is an expensive storage medium and CDs are cheap. Any questions?

Why do video game publishers love CD-ROM? Easy: ROM is a very expensive storage medium and CDs are cheap. Any more questions?

No doubt developers will eventually hack their way through CD technology's inherent weaknesses. The short-term answer is obvious: give us shovelware. In the early days of CD development, shovelware was a dirty word, as if CD-ROM would be nothing more than a messenger boy to carry the creations of the floppy disk and ROM cart geniuses. Scrap all that. If Sega wants to sell its CD drive, for example, it better get out the shovel.

Genesis software was hot right out of the gate, but there are also great games that got lost in the shuffle, like **Herzog Zwei** or **Toejam and Earl**. In fact, with the limited lifetime of most video games, users with less disposable income could even be offered several recent hits on a single CD at a fair price. The same goes for TTI. There are dozens of TG-16 titles that no more than a fraction of the potential audience has seen.

By the same token, who wouldn't put a set of classic adventures like the first four **King's Quest** or **Ultima** games on one CD with CD-quality sound on their wish lists?

In short, shovelware shouldn't be a dirty word anymore. It should be the primary thrust of early marketing efforts, especially on the part of video game companies such as Sega and TTI.

End of sermon.

— Bill Kunkel

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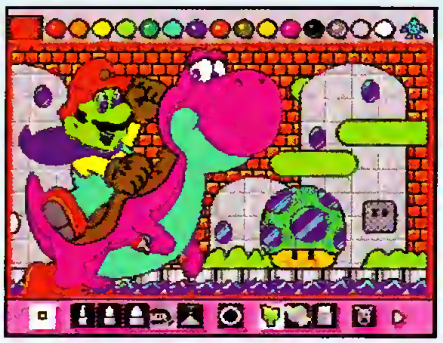
PAINTING A PICTURE PERFECT FUTURE

By Ed Dille

Mario Paint with Mouse for the SNES Nintendo ($59.95)

Followers of this column know that the normal slant is on the "miracle" behind the operation of new game peripherals. By way of analogy, the intent is to describe how the cotton gin works, as opposed to discussing how the invention altered society.

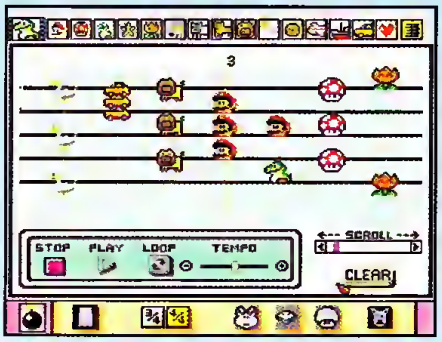


Try out the different features in the ready-to-paint coloring book section.

The former will still be addressed this month, albeit in a more condensed fashion than usual. The reason for the altered emphasis is the significance of Nintendo's decision to introduce traditional computer techniques and productivity applications to receptive video game players at a critical point in their lives.

What, one might reasonably ask, could be so significant about a deluxe mouse-based paint program? Consider this: the program is the first such release for the video game market, whose user base is in the millions. The largest segment of these consumers are children, eight to fifteen years of age, who will enter a job market glutted by the last remnants of the baby boomer generation. Further, recent studies show that the demand for unskilled labor is in rapid decline, while the technological base required for professional occupations has risen exponentially.

Given these trends, it is not unreasonable to expect that computer literacy will be a prerequisite for even the most rudimentary service industries (look at cosmetology shops that currently make up clients on the video screen prior to any actual applications). Indeed, one might even predict that, in the very near future, computer illiteracy will have an equivalent impact on the younger generation that traditional illiteracy had on their predecessors. The **Mario Paint** program and mouse offers a transitional medium that painlessly introduces video game purists to productivity applications, hopefully wetting their appetite for the increased capabilities offered by microcomputers.



The different objects represent various sounds in the music maker.

A mouse is nothing more than an inverted track ball (a concept that should be familiar to fans of coin-op games like **Centipede**). Held aloft in the upright position, the ball of the mouse rests on the outer casing and is incapable of registering movement. When placed on a pad, the slight downward pressure of the operator's hand brings the encased hemisphere of the mouse in contact with a ring of mechanical pickups. These pickups register the direction of rotation for the mouse ball within a single plane, for the entire 360 degree arc of a circle. The pickups convert the mechanical movement induced by the player to electrical impulses, which are transmitted to the control deck via game port one.

The cartridge defines the shape of the on-screen icon and the speed of cursor response (both of which are selectable), as well as the outer

The *Mario Paint* program and mouse offer a transitional medium that painlessly introduces video game purists to productivity applications.

boundaries of the area which can be manipulated (which is pre-set). The A & B buttons of the mouse are simple electric rocker switches which register input to the controlling cartridge. The functions they perform are defined by programming in the cartridge and vary with each application. The entire mechanical/electric conversion and signal display process occurs in nanoseconds, such that motion is fluid and the individual segments that compose it are indiscernible to the player.

The **Mario Paint** cartridge is actually several programs in one. A free-form palette is available, as well as coloring book drawings. Players have access to 195 colors, pattern combinations and objects along the top border of the screen, selectable through simple point-and-click scrolling. Along the bottom border are command icons and various implements for applying the colors. There are three sizes of crayons (which save wear and tear on the wallpaper over their traditional counterparts), block stamps, a spray paint can, three dimensional shapes which can be defined by on-screen mouse movement, a paint brush fill for large areas, line definer and an eraser.

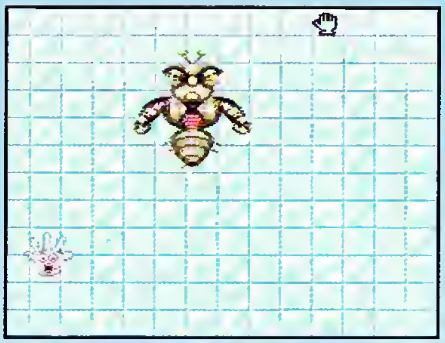
There is a separate area for designing new "stamps" for use by the main program, as well as full English and Japanese Kanji alphabet and numerical character sets. These also offer selectable sizes and fonts for adding text to pictures.

Naturally, all creations may be saved for viewing at a later date. A rudimentary animation studio is also included with selectable viewing speeds and loop playback options.

The only negative aspect of the paint section of the program is that fine line drawing is difficult and would be easier to accomplish with a pen-based mouse. Given, though, that budding artists should graduate to computer based paint programs at the earliest chance, this shortcoming is minor.

The program also gives players the chance to create original animation.

For the musically inclined, players may compose on a full measure, in three-quarter or full time, with a complete range of notes possible. Traditional music symbols are eschewed in favor of icons which will be recognizable (such as stars, yoshi and the like) from other **Mario** titles. Each icon is tied to a distinct sound and several may be combined on a given line to produce new sounds. Three musical scores are included to illustrate how different combinations sound and a tempo bar alters the speed of playback. Looping is possible and, as before, compositions may be saved for later review.

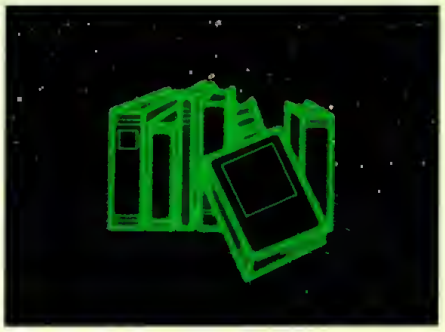


The game included lets users new to the mouse practice using it.

For those who desire a break from their creative activity, the cartridge also includes a surprisingly good arcade game based on eliminating swarms of bothersome insects. Each level begins with 100 flying pests, which appear initially in groups of two but grow exponentially from there. The player icon is a hand holding a fly swatter. Each insect poses different threats to the player, and the longer it is allowed to buzz menacingly around the screen, the more dangerous it becomes. Each level has a boss bug to be conquered. Players will find this distraction wonderfully addictive.

Development of the mouse peripheral and paint program is an interesting marketing decision for Nintendo, and represents an investment in the future. Although they retain the largest market share of the video game industry, it is apparent that Nintendo understands the need for the transition of existing users to more sophisticated applications. Such foresight is good for the industry and, most importantly, good for the targeted audience.

Expect upcoming releases to be port-overs of existing computer mouse-driven titles. Among those scheduled in the U.S. is **Might & Magic III**, and **Populous II** and **SimAnt** are being developed in Japan. In the interim, **Mario Paint** offers opportunities to harness the creativity of young minds striving to paint a picture-perfect future.



LORE

Sega Genesis Game Secrets

Volume 3, Rusel DeMaria and Zach Meston, Prima Publishing, 364 pages, $9.99

"Prima's Secrets of the Games" is a series of hintbooks for video game systems. This paperback describes in detail 17 games for the Genesis, plus a chapter on **Superstar Sports Games**, and a few short tips on some other games.

Games covered are: **Alisia Dragoon, Desert Strike, D&D: Warriors of the Eternal Sun, Earnest Evans, Golden Axe II, The Immortal, Kid Chameleon, Marble Madness, Pit-Fighter, The Simpsons, Splatterhouse 2, Steel Empire, The Terminator, Todd's Adventures in Slime World, Toki Going Ape Spit, Two Crude Dudes,** and **Ys III.** Items in the **Superstar Sports** set are: **Joe Montana SportsTalk II Football, John Madden Football '92, Jordan vs. Bird, RBI Baseball 3, Road Rash** and **Speedball II: Brutal Deluxe.**

Each primary game chapter leads with the story of the game, number of players, scoring technique, lives and options for continuation, and weapons, armor or special items. An illustration of the controller shows how to use the buttons and control pad. Characters are grouped as Friends or Enemies. Where a variety of items or weapons are available, a list provides descriptions of each, with powers, effects or capacity.

Strategies and walkthroughs include substantial maps and screen shots however, they're all in black and white on uncoated paper, so details on the screen shots tend to get lost. A walkthrough may be incomplete; about halfway through **Dungeons & Dragons: Warriors of the Eternal Sun**, the book recommends Sega's own hintbook for the remainder of the quest.

All in all, the book can serve a purpose or two beyond easing the player through the tough spots.

It can be used as a buyer's guide for games the player doesn't already have. It also has many of those special button sequences that can get the player extra lives, power-ups or hidden levels.

— Ross Chamberlain

Ultima: The Avatar Adventures

Rusel DeMaria and Caroline Spector, Prima Publishing Co., 389 pages, $18.95

Ultima: The Avatar Adventures is a comprehensive chronicle of the second Ultima trilogy: **Quest for the Avatar**, **Warriors of Destiny** and **The False Prophet**. Added bonuses for the faithful are introductory sections and game tips for both **Ultima VII** and **Ultima Underworld**. Even the purest of heart may take an occasional wrong turn on the perilous paths to Avatarhood.

After a brief introduction by series creator Richard Garriott, each game is treated in narrative fashion, with certain key words and concepts printed in boldface. The lively prose encompasses the entire game without dwelling on the details of combat that will consume much of the player's time. These 60 to 100 page treatments comprise the bulk of the book.

Following these, "quick and dirty" walkthroughs provide locations of all key items, characters and moongates to allow rapid transit within Britannia. Further, the sequence of object manipulation and the answers to all of the game puzzles are provided in quick succession. Players who are looking only for a specific item, such as where to find a particular rune stone, should limit their research to pages specified in the narratives to avoid seeing more than they intend. Immediately following the walkthrough of each game are annotated maps and charts that detail Britannia as never before.

The first appendix details **Ultima VII** and **Ultima Underworld**, again in narrative journal format with illustrations of the first two levels of the Underworld. The final appendix is a 25-page interview with Mr. Garriott, wherein he discusses many of the design decisions that influenced the evolution of the series, including glimpses of **Ultima**'s **VIII and IX.**

— Ed Dille

The Electronic Games Reader Poll

The editors of **Electronic Games** want to know about you, the reader, so that we can tailor the magazine to meet your particular needs. The monthly Reader Poll will let us know what aspects of the electronic gaming hobby are most interesting to you. We also want to know what you're playing, and to receive your vote for the most popular game programs each month.

Just circle your choices below, then send your poll sheet (or a photocopy if you prefer) to:
Electronic Games Reader Poll, 330 S. Decatur, Ste. 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.

Sex: Male Female
Age: Under 12 12-16 17-25 26-40 Over 40
Family Income: Under $20,000 $20,000-$39,000 $40,000-$60,000 Over $60,000
I regularly play: Video Games Computer Games Both
I spend _____ hours per week playing electronic games:
Under 2 2-5 6-10 More than 10
I spend under $_____ per week on computer and video games:
$2 $2-$5 $6-$10 More than $10

Please check all hardware you own or plan to buy in the next 12 months:

	OWN	PLAN TO BUY
Nintendo NES	____	____
Other 8 Bit Videogame	____	____
Genesis	____	____
Super NES	____	____
Turbo Grafx-16	____	____
Neo*Geo	____	____
Game Boy	____	____
Game Gear	____	____
Lynx	____	____
Amiga	____	____
Macintosh	____	____
MS-DOS Computer	____	____
Other (write in name) _____	____	____

I will____ will not___ buy a Multimedia gaming system in the next 12 months.

Please rate the following game subjects from 1 (no interest to me) to 10 (very interesting to me):

Science Fiction _____ Martial Arts _____
Fantasy _____ Mystery _____
Arcade _____ Military _____
Sports _____ Flight _____
Other (please write in category) _____

Please rate your interest in these types of electronic games from 1 (not interesting) to 10 (very interesting):

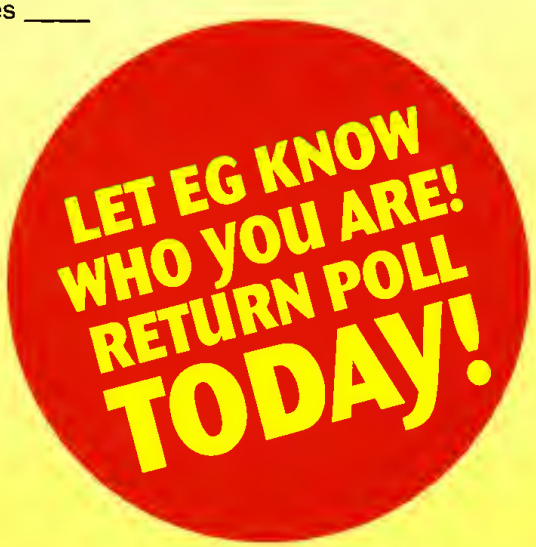
Video Games _____ Coin-Ops Games _____
Computer Games _____ MultiMedia Games _____

My favorite video games are:
1._____
2._____
3._____

My favorite computer games are:
1._____
2._____
3._____

My favorite multimedia game is:
1._____

My favorite coin-op game is:
1._____



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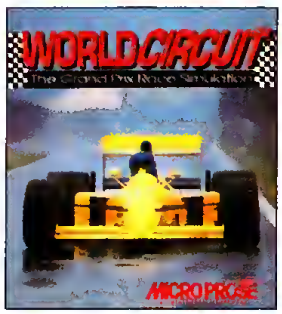

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